

“WHAT WAS ONCE REBELLION IS NOW CLEARLY JUST A SOCIAL SECT”:

IDENTITY, IDEOLOGICAL CONFLICT

AND THE FIELD OF PUNK ROCK ARTISTIC PRODUCTION

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By

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ABSTRACT

I advance a sociological reappraisal of the Western punk rock youth cultural artistic form. Contrasting prevalent perspectives correlating punk rock culture with adolescent rites of superficial social rebellion, I argue that the art form often exudes an underappreciated level of sophistication. I argue for the presence of two dominant strains of punk artistic logic, and demonstrate how each correspond with popular trends in neo-Marxist social theory. However, I also note that these competing logics promote contradictory forms of punk artistic conduct. Incorporating the perspectives of Pierre Bourdieu, I link this imperative for ideological division with the punk artists' placement within fields of cultural production. Drawing from the artistry and testimonies of historically significant punk artists (and artistic consecrators), I argue that notable instances of punk ideological debate simultaneously function to allow punk artists to compete amongst one another for claims to artistic distinction and authority. I consider significant case studies wherein ideological debates double as tactics through which artists bolster their own claims to distinction in striving to delegitimize the authority of their ideological competitors. I question whether the primary function of ideological punk artistic debate stem from sincere ideological imperatives, or concerns surrounding the processes of accrediting individual claims to artistic legitimacy within the punk artistic field. Critically considering the interaction between collectivist punk artistic ideologies and the individualistic imperative of asserting personal claims to authoritative punk identity, I conclude that movements toward internal differentiation ultimately undermine punk rocks' capacity to serve as a substantive counter-hegemonic artistic movement.

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DEDICATION

“To the lost...”

~ James Edison Darmody

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Chapter One. “What was once rebellion is now clearly just a social sect”: Identity, Ideological Conflict and the Field of Punk Rock Artistic Production

1.1) Introduction

To date, a half-century has elapsed since the emergence of Western punk subcultures. Though popularly characterized as youth-driven collective expressions of social dissent and non-conformity, punk has seldom been taken seriously as a substantive counter-cultural force. At best, punk is described as a set of practices through which youth engage in creative (yet purely symbolic) means of resisting indoctrination into the parent culture (Muggleton & Weinzierl, 2003; Bennett & Kahn-Harris, 2004; Fox, 1987; Hebdige, 1979). At worst, punk is regarded as an immoral and dangerous youth culture against which to validate the perspective that youth are becoming increasingly immoral and dangerous (Blush, 2001; O’Hara, 1999; Savage, 1991). Similar trends in popular discourse have, likewise, functioned to undermine attention to the ideological dimensions of punk rock artistry. Punk rock is easily written off as a youth cultural form that engages with themes of rebellion and social refusal, simply, because superficial expressions of rebellion and social refusal now read as ‘natural’ expressions of adolescence.

In contrast, I advance qualitative evidence that punk artistic culture, though largely homogenous in the manner in which artists characterize contemporary trends in social organization with the interests of the socially privileged and empowered, is informed by *competing* forms of punk artistic ideology. I draw particular attention to two forms of punk artistic logic which have had great influence in guiding the lineages of significant punk artists. One suggests that punk musicians should infiltrate the popular cultural landscape, thus exposing

the broadest possible audience to the proposed critical perspectives and practices. The other contends that the significance of the art form resides in its exteriority to mainstream culture industries, and advocates for artistic conventions which restrict the commercial viability (and, by extension, the audience-base) of the art form. These competing variations in punk artistic logic contribute to a longstanding tradition whereby punk rock artists have tailored their work toward their preferred expressions of punk artistic philosophy, often by drawing the legitimacy of their competitors into question. I argue that these contrasting perspectives undermine the counter-hegemonic capacities of the punk rock art form, and draw attention toward longstanding tradition whereby significant punk groups have suggested the same.

I argue that these debates surrounding best artistic practice stem from the close relationship between the development of artistic ideological allegiances and the means through which individual punk artists or groups assess (and often aspire to discredit) the legitimacy of others. Drawing primarily from the theories of Pierre Bourdieu, I contend that a long lineage of punk artistic artifacts speak to the processes through which such debates carry out a secondary function: allowing individual punk artists to compete amongst one another for claims to artistic distinction and punk cultural status, thereby reproducing the very structural hierarchies they critique. Drawing from the methodologies of content and discourse analysis, I demonstrate that instances of punk artistic debate contribute to two significant processes: allowing that an artist might advocate for their preferred vision of the ends to which punk rock might aspire to achieve, yet also allowing that artists compete, amongst *each other*, to reinforce their own claims to an authenticated punk identity. The list of luminary punk rock and hardcore acts that have contributed toward these processes, explicitly through their lyrics and testimonials or implicitly in their artistic and personal conduct include many of the form's most revered acts: The Clash,

Crass, The Sex Pistols, Minor Threat, Black Flag, the Dead Kennedys, Bikini Kill, Operation Ivy, Bad Religion, NoFX, Rancid, Propagandhi and Anti-Flag, among scores of others.

Approaching punk artistic culture as a Bourdieuan field of restricted production, I demonstrate the emergence and operation of a 'symbolic economy' wherein artists compete for claims to authority by challenging the legitimacy of their ideological competitors. I argue that these tendencies play a significant role in undermining punks' capacity to serve as a substantive counter-hegemonic art form. Finally, I draw attention to the manner in which the ideological and interpersonal tensions that undermine the possibility for solidarity can be found in other non-conformist or socially critical groups and movements. If the 21st century is indeed defined by a culture of competitive hyper-individualism, and promotes that claims to power find demonstration through claims to superiority and self-distinction, I advance the following case study to illuminate how concerns surrounding authenticity function to undermine the achievement of collective goals

1.2) Preliminary Notes on the Concept of Punk

As a popular tradition of socially critical music and a youth-subculture, 'punk' has developed a reputation as a particularly contentious concept. Evoking the term among fans of the music is likely to instigate debate regarding how 'punk' is to be properly understood. For some, punk represents a condemnation of those dominant Western values that ensure the perpetuation of inequitable and exploitative class relations. For others, punk entails a commitment to individualism and a willingness to 'speak' through the medium of artistic products and personal spectacle. Some approach punk as a haven for those wishing to seek out

group bonds and belonging in the face of an increasingly individualistic culture. Others perceive punk as a means of ‘acting out’ the rites of adolescent aggression through the adoption of sensationalistic tropes in fashion and taste in music. Logically speaking, there may be as many definitions of ‘punk’ as there are participants, each reflective of the unique pathways through which an individual came to discover the music and its corresponding subcultures. Nevertheless, the tradition of debating the “true” definition of punk – seemingly for the sake of allowing all involved to become further entrenched within the distinct perspective they already possess – has passed down among generations of punk subculturalists like a curious rite of passage.

Though I advance a sociological re-examination of trends in punk rock ideology and practice, doing so promises to be a muddled venture lest the reader attempt to perceive of ‘punk’ less as a subculture than a collection of ideas. Over the course of the chapters to follow, I demonstrate how the ideas which informed the emergence of punk are reflected in the observations, theories, and proscriptions of a long procession of sociological scholars and social critics. I consider the process through which the idea of ‘punk’ was shaped by a range of different actors – each operating in collusion with situated visions of what punk was, is, could, and should be – and how these influences have resulted in the self-actualization of several communities of punk rock artistic producers. Their interactions have ensured that prevalent perspectives on what punk ‘truly’ represents have been perpetually reinvented, challenged, abandoned, revived and reviled by subsequent generations of punk artists.

Given the variety of ways in which punk is conceptualized as a concept, it is unsurprising that many resources devote their efforts toward trying to articulate the definitive characteristics of the corresponding punk culture. While O’Hara’s *The Philosophy of Punk* acknowledges that perspectives characterizing punk as a “youth trend”, “gut rebellion and change” and “a

formidable voice of opposition” (1999: 41) all hold merit, his own description of the culture counters the notion that punk culturalists merely engage in superficial stylistic tropes:

It is true that the traditional styles of dress and music of punk rock are often offensive and shocking to the mainstream public, but it is misleading to think of punk as an appearance-oriented movement. Mindless, temporary rebellion can be very fun, but it is not very effective or useful. Punks have evolved far enough to favor substance over style, a fact almost always ignored or twisted in media representations. It is not enough for a person to look different from the mainstream, there is an important emphasis on consciously becoming one’s own self. (O’Hara, 1999: 36-38)

Similarly, Cogan’s *Encyclopedia of Punk* (2006) extends a definition which does well in highlighting the fact that punk artistry, rather than serving as a monolithic youth cultural form, has undergone a procession of significant permutations over the decades. Rather than accredit perspectives which have traditionally approached shifts in punk artistry or cultural practice as signalling punk’s ‘death’, Cogan characterizes punk as a culture which has been, and continues to be, reshaped and revised by generational blocs of punk participants:

Punk is herein shown not as a historical epoch with a clearly defined timeline, but instead as a social and political subculture that is constantly changing, sometimes far beyond the scope of the original punks’ intent [...] Punk is a subculture, and although subcultures have founders and are characterized by codes, established fashions, and (very often) rules, this does not mean that these communities remain static or come to an end after the founders have left the scene [...] in my view, [punk rock] continues, adapting to changes in the

cultural milieu. New punks constantly reinvigorate the scene, creating new rules, new fashions, and new symbols that many of the originators would not recognize but that are still demonstrably punk. (Cogan, 2006: viii-x)

In my opinion, these descriptions touch upon punk cultural characteristics of some import. As O'Hara notes, punk cultures entail more ideological substance than superficial public understandings of punk might accredit. Defined less in terms of a youth movement engaging in rites of social refusal and non-conformity for their own sake, many punk cultural products and conventions of practice stem from well-reasoned criticisms of social organization and the inequitable distribution of power within Western society. Cogan, on the other hand, stresses the importance of approaching punk as a youth culture which evolves not only with the onset of new socio-cultural contexts, but with the processes whereby new populations of punk subculturalists assume vacated positions of authority and distinction. While O'Hara draws attention to the prospect that punk demands that participants 'become one's own self, aspects of this project speak toward the implicit processes through which punk subcultural communities often impress rigid expectations of practice and self-expression upon those operating within their symbolic borders. Further, while Cogan notes that generations of punk subculturalists contribute toward the development of new permutations in punk artistry and conduct, I identify one particularly contentious line of recurring punk subcultural discourse that has persisted in spite of its shifting subcultural landscape: whether punk rock should aspire to reach mass audiences, or stringently operate independent of (and in opposition to) mainstream culture industries. I argue that the presence of these contrasting forms of artistic logic have contributed toward the formation of an

artistic culture which counterintuitively undermines its own capacities to effect substantive social change, in part, by reinforcing staunch divisions amongst its' own ranks.

1.3) Methods in the Selection of Representative Punk Artistic Producers.

O'Hara's lament that punk culture is commonly misconstrued as a superficial youth cultural rite of symbolic social resistance resonates with the academic study of punk. Far more often than not, scholars have tried to understand the emergence and perpetuation of punk by 'reading' tropes in punk dress or, alternatively, examining the means through which punk participants articulate the logics underlying these patterns in self-presentation. Indeed, Dick Hebdige's (1979) highly influential *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* barely notes the existence of punk rock. Without suggesting that there is little to be learned by understanding proclivities of punk fashion, this vein of research cannot help but contribute toward an understanding of the individually-situated means through which participants substantiate the significance of their own participation. While an understanding of the highly personalized processes whereby individuals derive meaning from, their participation in punk culture contributes much toward our understanding of individualistic processes of self-building, I find it puzzling that academia has seldom considered what I believe to be the most widely accessible, far-reaching and authoritative resource for an education on punk conventions and value systems: namely, the content of punk rock artistry itself.

There are, of course, significant (yet considerably dated) exceptions: Greil Marcus's (1989) *Lipstick Traces: A Secret History of the Twentieth Century* and Dave Laing's (1985) excellent *One Chord Wonders: Power and Meaning in Punk Rock* both aspire to understand the

emergence of punk in mid-1970s England by analyzing the music of bands crucial to the era. Nevertheless, and as valuable as these works are for contextualizing the emergence of punk rock, they would be hard pressed to speak to the organizational permutations and ideological shifts that punk has undergone over the course of the intervening decades. As these works serve to extend a sociological contextualization of the central punk rock artists of the late 1970s, my research aspires to engage with subsequent eras in punk artistic culture.

Given the liquid nature of the concept of punk, it would be worthwhile to note that my selection of artists draws influence from punk rock's most prevalent genesis narrative. I draw from the music and testimonies from four decades worth of punk rock artists and enthusiasts, but also from the music writers and media figures, be they grassroots or mainstream, responsible for passing the tale down throughout subsequent generations of punk rock enthusiasts. In some cases, these publications in and of themselves - including submissions such as Savage's (1991) *England's Dreaming*, McNeil and McCain's (2006) *Please Kill Me*, O'Hara's (1999) *The Philosophy of Punk* and Steven Blush's (2001) *American Hardcore: A Tribal History* - have taken on a distinct air of authenticity across the punk subcultural landscape. Even though these luminary works extend primary focus toward seemingly insular eras along the trajectory of punk rock's historical record, more recent publications, including Cogan's (2006) *The Encyclopedia of Punk* and Diehl's (2007) *My So-Called Punk* have taken pains to illuminate the genealogical associations among distinct eras in punk rock artistry. The art form has also served as the subject of a number of high profile documentaries, including such notable films as Penelope Spheeris' (1981) *The Decline of Western Civilization*, Don Letts' (2005) *Punk: Attitude* and Paul Rachman's (2006) *American Hardcore* (based largely upon the Blush book of the same name). These resources contribute to a consistent historical narrative which, itself, commonly cites the

significance of a particular contingent of acts. Further, many of these bands consistently hold positions of considerable prominence in contemporary media efforts to rank the most influential punk albums (Spin Magazine, 2001; Young, 2006; LA Weekly, 2013), not to mention reader polls meant to accomplish the same (Rolling Stone, 2011). The prospect that contemporary punk artistic consumers still hold these acts in positions of high regard finds some reflection in the all-time best-selling album list provided by the popular online record store *Interpunk* (2015); an interesting mixture of artists proven popular at the website's inception and by a variety of historical luminaries including Minor Threat, Black Flag and the Dead Kennedys (the 1989 Operation Ivy album *Energy* has long retained its position as the best-seller of all time). Many of these acts reinforce their artistic ideologies through the content of their songs, their artistic conduct and, perhaps most saliently, the discourses they employ when calling the legitimacy of other punk artists into question. Beyond serving as artists - or artistic combatants - of some historical significance, I argue for their utility in drawing attention to the Bourdieusian dynamics which have long affected the construction of punk authenticity.

1.4) Contributions to Knowledge and Chapter Overview

Above all else, my research contributes a unique sociological re-appraisal of punk rock's status as a youth cultural artistic form. Superficial readings of punk artistry and practice often reinforce the perspective that punk rock stems simply from the inherent compulsion, common among all adolescents, to engage in sensational (yet largely symbolic) rites of social rebellion. I draw attention toward commonalities in punk artistic philosophy and significant trends in neo-Marxist social theory, in part, to argue that punk rock be taken seriously as an ideologically

potent youth cultural form. My research advances a plethora of examples whereby punk rock artists, at times with a great deal of sophistication, correlate underprivilege and social inequality with the operation of mainstream social institutions designed to benefit those with economic and cultural power. In a sense, the traditions in punk artistic ideology I highlight here indicate ‘artistic ends’ informed very heavily by this characterization of Western power relations. Rather than tailoring their music toward ends of providing mere entertainment or achieving economic success, the artists I detail throughout constitute different perspectives regarding how to contest these power relations. In essence, and in contradistinction to any perspectives that punk culture (or, for that matter, youth culture) is barren of ideology, I instead argue for the presence of a long lineage of punk rock artefacts which are (to bastardize a classic Hebdige quote) *pregnant* with ideology.

My research also makes a significant contribution in arguing that these watershed instances of artistic conflict draw their inspiration from concerns beyond codifying any given punk artistic ideology as being superior. While the punk artists I detail here advocate for particular punk artistic philosophies, I argue that they must be approached as actors engaged in the process of asserting and actualizing claims to punk identity. Stressing that any analysis of youth subculture must necessarily assume the existence of youth culture, I draw from perspectives correlating parallel constructions of ‘adolescence’ and ‘identity’ in the Western context. Against the perspective that the constitution of identity is largely carried out through consumption and competition, I characterize punk subcultures as Bourdieusian *fields* and punk artistic culture as a *field of restricted production*. Thus, ideological adherents can also be approached as individuals whose claims to authoritative punk identity are predicated on the corresponding identification of illegitimate or inauthentic counterparts. These dynamics,

evolving in nature yet discernible throughout the punk artistic form's historical record, lead punk artists to compete for claims to power in a manner ensuring division and disharmony. Thus, my research argues for the sophistication of punk artistic ideological explorations while demonstrating the myriad ways in which the divisionary 'scene politics' surrounding punk rock's artistic production undermine punk's potential to act as a substantive counter-hegemonic force. I critically examine the potential for movements of substantive ideological solidarity to advocate through art when art itself – or, more specifically, artistic taste – largely facilitates self-actualization through the recognition and reinforcement of difference. Ultimately, I argue that punk rock ideology and artistic identity conflate in a manner which the fracturous field of subcultural studies, itself partitioned into competing fields, has not yet dutifully explored.

My research can also aid in better understanding the challenges faced by many contemporary social movements. In recent years, web-mediative communicative technologies have contributed to the emergence of a variety of groups – the Occupy movement, Idle No More and the 'hacktivist' collective Anonymous among them – that promote social justice and advocate for systemic change. As with punk, these movements coalesce around common symbols and, informed by shared values and viewpoints, aspire to challenge hegemony in spreading awareness and promoting resistance. Yet, these movements also appear susceptible to internal fracture and a loss of momentum as group discourse trends toward debating the legitimate goals of the collective and differentiating between the 'real' devotees and the 'pretenders' among their own ranks (Schwartz, 2013; Sorkin, 2012; Pickett, 2011). Though I focus on the culture of punk musicians, the observations and variables which I call attention to here apply to understanding the manner in which contemporary social movements suffer an increased risk of early fragmentation and decline.

In chapter two, I offer a brief introduction to pertinent sociological perspectives surrounding the social construction of adolescence and the subsequent genesis of youth subcultural groups. My overview highlights the gradual codification of 'youth culture,' the prevalent social scripts surrounding this emergent population of 'teenagers' and the manner in which the consumption of consumer goods came to facilitate expressions of 'self.' I then introduce readers to the dominant theoretical orientations through which contemporary sociologists most often examine the emergence of youth subcultural groups. Whereas the neo-Marxist theorists of the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) frame youth subcultural conventions as a response to the social marginalization and political disempowerment experienced by youth populations, 'post-subcultural' perspectives approach youth subcultural groups as ideologically neutralized sites wherein participants might 'play' with various highly creative - though impermanent - expressions of identity.

In chapter three, I consider parallels between trends in punk artistic ideology and the Neo-Marxist theoretical tradition. While drawing attention to the parallels between these schools of critical thought and variations in punk ideology, I also discuss the manner in which these theorists sought to consider the relationship between ideology, art, and socio-political mobilization. It is here that I introduce Gramsci's concept of hegemony and the function of lower class 'intellectuals,' as well as the perspectives of Adorno and Horkheimer (2002) on artistic authenticity and the ideological function of the entertainment industry. Finally, I conclude the chapter with a brief analysis of Althusser's notes on the interrelationship between ideology and identity, as well as methodologies through which to draw out and speak to the influence of ideology. By the conclusion of this third chapter, I advance a preliminary

characterization of diverging forms of punk artistic logic, and highlight how they contribute toward an overarching lack of consensus within the broader field of punk artistic production.

Offering a more explicit consideration of the manner in which punk artistic communities distribute claims to legitimacy and artistic status, chapter four carries my argument that punk artists can be conceptualized as participating within Bourdieuan (1984, 1993) 'fields' of restricted production, wherein conventions and practices designed to signify and deduce punk 'authenticity' are developed and enforced. This discussion requires consideration of Bourdieu's thoughts on the symbolic functions of cultural consumption, the introduction of Thornton's (1996) concept of 'subcultural capital', and a consideration of how the organization of punk subcultural participation impacts the processes whereby individuals – including punk artistic producers – take on a self-actualized punk 'identity'. My analysis also considers the gender performative theories of Butler (1999) and Connell (2005) to explain why the North American field of hardcore punk evolved to favor hyper-masculinized forms of subcultural practice. By the close of this fourth chapter, I will extend the overarching hypothesis that the field of punk rock artistic production is navigated between contrasting ideologies: one which locates punk rock's purpose in inspiring the masses toward engaging in activist praxis, and another defining that purpose in term of facilitating exclusivist communities which operate in conscious insulation from mainstream cultures. The remainder of my research then examines whether these contrasting ideologies might stem from substantive concerns about mainstream co-optation or, rather, the more individualistic concerns of status-seeking producers vying for distinction against the established conventions of a punk artistic 'symbolic economy'.

Chapter five investigates the genesis of socio-politicized punk rock. Locating the stylistic elements of the punk rock field in the works of artists such as The Stooges, the New

York Dolls and The Ramones, I analyze popular subculturalist narratives concerning how punk rock became ‘politicized’ with the emergence of English groups such as the Sex Pistols, The Clash, X-Ray Spex, Crass, among other notable groups. I detail how different groups of self-ascribed subcultural knowledge producers – including early punk rock artists, music industry insiders, fanzine publishers, and mainstream media figures – competed for the authority to define the ideological conventions of punk rock and, by extension, the emerging punk rock subcultures. Finally, I demonstrate how sociological attention to the late 1970s punk movement not only neglected to consider the content of the art propelling the subculture under study, but posit that this research might have contributed to shaping the North American hardcore movement by focusing on the aestheticism and the purported ideological ineptitude of English punk subcultural groups.

Charting the 1980s North American punk and hardcore movements, chapter six considers the development of the ‘DIY’ ethic of punk artistic production and, with it, the development of a number of regionalized punk artistic communities. Focusing primarily on the development of historically significant ‘scenes’ in California, Los Angeles and Washington, I contend that the artistic output of such bands as the Dead Kennedys, Minor Threat, Black Flag and Operation Ivy speak to the presence of discernible ideological tensions among groups aspiring to promote widespread critical consciousness and those vying instead to ensure the development of regionalized, and highly insulated, punk and hardcore communities. I speak to the development of hardcore conventions which equated hardcore authenticity with tropes of identity performance akin to Connell’s (2005) concept of ‘protest masculinities’; a trend which not only divided the field along gendered lines, but eventually led to the genesis of the Riot Grrrl philosophy.

Concerning itself with a period in the 1990s when punk rock gained popularity with mainstream audiences, chapter seven considers the manner in which different punk producers - including Bad Religion, NOFX, Rancid, Propagandhi and Anti-Flag - utilized their music and practices of artistic production to advance their ideological preferences. Chapter seven also concerns itself with the different ways in which a select contingent of these significant cultural producers modified their artistic ideologies and practices in response to the September 2001 terrorist attacks and subsequent actions of the Bush administration. Observing this as an era in which groups such as NOFX and Anti-Flag began promoting organized political participation, the chapter also considers how debates revolving around 'authentic' punk practices once again resurfaced as Propagandhi and NOFX each sought to criticize the artistic practices endorsed by the other. In conclusion, the chapter considers this artistic debate as evidence of the punk artistic community's status as a Bourdieuan field. Finally, chapter eight considers the prospect that web-mediated music sharing has rendered the Frankfurtian 'theory of co-optation' problematic, and contends that continued reference to 'selling out' speaks to its utility within the context of the punk artistic 'symbolic economy'.

Chapter Two. Adolescent Identity, Youth Culture and the Sociological Field of Subcultural Studies

2.1) Introduction

While my research draws a great deal of influence from the sociological field of subcultural studies, it would be worthwhile to note that, not unlike the concept of punk, the term ‘subculture’ has become an increasingly problematic concept in academic circles. As the term seems to take on unique sociological connotations with each successive generation of researchers, a myriad of different (and sometimes diametrically opposed) definitions of subculture have been advanced. While it is tempting to forego any close consideration of the ‘subcultural debate’ and simply define subculture as something along the lines of ‘a collective wherein interaction between participants leads to the development and distribution of shared beliefs and values that are often reflected in group styles and affinities for entertainment products,’ an overview of the contrasting means in which different traditions of sociological thought approach the phenomenon of youth subcultural groups cannot be taken to approach an overarching consensus.

While I advance a critical overview of those sociological orientations most prevalently used in ‘making sense’ of youth subcultures, I preface this with a consideration of perspectives relating to the social construction of adolescence within a Western context. While subcultural researchers have long characterized and contextualized the manner in which subculture-involved adolescents broadcast and substantiate claims to privileged identities among their cohorts, I feel that it is equally important to consider the genesis of the culturally prescribed methods through

which emergent 'teenage' populations came to constitute, or came to be inspired to contribute to, a unique North American 'youth culture.'

2.2) On the Social Construction of Adolescence

To date, it has become traditional for social researchers to advance the prospect that the concept of 'adolescence', though so culturally prevalent as to be taken for granted today, was largely forged and accredited by way of a number of significant transitions toward industrialized urban societies. As Fasick (1994) notes, human societies largely lived within tight-knit agrarian societies prior to the development of industrial methods of goods production and distribution. Families were often responsible for producing their own goods and ensuring their own self-sustenance and, given the demand that all members of a family collectively contribute their attentions toward procuring resources, children were expected to take on the role of 'providers' as early as the age of ten or eleven. Further, as the fields of medicine and the human sciences were far less advanced, high rates of infant death contributed to the necessity that families produce higher numbers of offspring as a means of ensuring their collective survival.

These trends in family organization began to shift with the transition toward industrialization and urbanization. As technological progress contributed to the development of both the capitalist economic system and the migration from rural to urbanized living, shifting trends in social organization would lead Western society to revise a number of the common assumptions regarding the unique status of pre-adult populations. As Fasick (1994) further notes, the transition toward industrial urban societies instigated a number of "demographic transitions" which would contribute toward the social construction of adolescence. Just as

technological and scientific innovations revolutionized processes revolving around the production and distribution of goods, they also contributed toward medical achievements meant to bolster the average life expectancy. The fact that 'able-bodied' adults now found their odds of living longer to be drastically improved instigated a shift whereby the labor of 'able-bodied' children was not only no longer required, but might serve to impede adult laborers with family responsibilities from garnering employment. Improvements throughout the fields of medicine and health would also correlate with a decline in birth rates, as families were no longer pressed to ensure their own survival through the production of large numbers of offspring. The transition toward industrialized urban societies would also contribute to yet another social 'innovation': that of the procurement of wages in excess of those necessary to provide for emergent smaller families. The fact that the average middle-class family was no longer required to produce as many children, when coupled with the fact that one upper-to-middle-class 'breadwinner' could support a familial unit further contributed to the perspective that youth needn't participate in the workforce as a means of ensuring family survival. This demographic shift in particular is, by and large, implicated in the introduction of mandatory education legislation.

Though Fasick concedes that the majority of Western youth came to be enrolled within the mainstream education system long before persons aged less than sixteen were legally required to do so, the onset of mandatory education legislation from throughout the 19th century, ensured that youth populations were prohibited from saturating the Western workforce. Mandatory education responded to a number of interrelated aims, including those of subjecting youth to 'proper' trends in socialization and ensuring that they were prevented from participating within the economic system until they had either successfully graduated or reached the mandated minimum age of sixteen years. The onset of mandatory education and the Western transition

toward small-scale families would eventually contribute to yet further modifications in the structure of Western familial systems. While mandatory education legislation succeeded in preventing youth from participating in the workforce, it also ensured that those aged sixteen or less would be prohibited from surviving beyond the confines of the family unit. This concern largely instigated the development of a new Western cultural practice whereby the parents of a young person would be expected to provide for the youth until they were no longer legally required to participate within the education system. This suggests that those trends in 'adolescent parental dependency' which many of us encountered throughout our upbringing (and, indeed, which many of us likely look to as a 'commonsense' feature in social organization) largely emerged as a 'response' to the social re-organization required by the onset of significant demographic shifts.

2.2.1) The Invention of the 'Teenager'

Fasick speaks to the significance of the development of a consumer market tailored directly toward adolescent consumers. As the concept of 'adolescence' began to take on credibility throughout Western society, the mainstream culture industry began to market distinct forms of entertainment, fashion, and leisure time activities to youth consumers. This contributed to the codification and reinforcement of the prospect that adolescent populations constituted a distinct 'youth culture'. While Fasick suggests that the youth-centered consumer market reinforced the perspective, among members of the parent culture, that youth ought to be perceived as a social group with distinct cultural practices, Medovoi (2005) suggests that these narratives would also have an indelible effect on the manner in which youth perceived

themselves. As the mainstream culture industries began to promote emergent Western musical forms (such as Jazz, Blues, Soul and, shortly thereafter, Rock N' Roll) to distinctly defined Western youth 'markets', youth populations themselves were given the impression that self-actualization and identity formation could be best achieved through the consumption of distinct cultural goods. Noting that the marketing strategies of the mid-20th century culture industries framed the concept of identity "as the product of self-defining and self-affirming acts that confront a punitive authoritarian 'other'", Medovoi suggests that youth cultural goods did not merely serve to naturalize the life-stage of adolescence, but correlate this life-stage with "[an individual's] triumphant self-transformation as it detaches itself agonistically from the coerced expectations of 'society', America, one's elders [and so forth]" (2005: 5). In so many words, the Western culture industries promoted discourses meant to popularize the concepts of 'identity' and 'adolescence,' and effectively 'sold' young populations on the prospect that forming a distinctly adolescent identity was predicated upon engaging in some measure of non-conformity.

The implicit function of prompting youth populations to signify their social 'refusal' through purchasing the goods of the corporate culture industries would codify two Western youth cultural processes: one whereby youth were urged to engage in practices of 'self-building' through the consumption of consumer goods; another whereby the very consumer goods marketed toward youth served to extend to the wider society the impression that there was something inherently different about the emergent 'teenaged' generation. This suggests that Western notions surrounding the prospect that 'teenage rebellion' is a normal, natural, and 'commonsense' byproduct of one's voyage through the life cycle may, indeed, itself be a bi-product of corporate-cultural initiatives centered around manufacturing a new consumer base

(namely, 'the youth') who might then signify their 'social refusal' by consuming the goods of the very 'dominant culture' which they are ostensibly rallying against.

While the mainstream culture industries undoubtedly contributed to the codification of the 'teenaged' life-stage and the popularization of consumer goods through which to express one's 'rebellious' status, many sociological researchers point to the processes whereby subcultural youth groups emerged throughout the West in the 1960s. While these groups most certainly continued the tradition of expressing collective identity through the procurement of consumer items and unique collective practices, they did not engage in these trends by endorsing the 'youth consumer goods' as prescribed and popularized throughout Western popular culture. Instead, these youth consumers largely devised their own trends in fashion, gravitated toward cultural goods which did not stem from the mainstream culture industries and, in many cases, actively contributed toward producing their own cultural goods and products. Over the subsequent fifty years, a number of different theoretical perspectives have emerged in attempting to 'explain' youth subculture, with many focusing on their use of deviance as a form of social protest.

2.3) The Contentious Discipline of Subcultural Studies

The sociological study of subculture can be traced back to research conducted through the University of Chicago beginning in the 1920s. While the members of what would come to be known as the 'Chicago School' did not set out to study subcultures, they nonetheless provided fertile ground for the eventual emergence of the sub-discipline of subcultural studies. Whether analyzing the implicit conventions granting order and form to the city's homeless and underemployed communities (Anderson, 1923), or the processes through which ethnically-based

street gangs established shared practices and values in response to the pressures of increased rates of urbanization and immigration (Thrasher, 1927), Chicago School theorists would note the presence of interesting similarities amongst a range of subcultural groups. Members of these communities were found to act in accordance with implied (but nowhere explicitly stated) rules of group conduct, construct social networks to alleviate the pressures of impoverished life, and formed a shared means of ‘understanding their worlds’ as informed, in equal measure, by their internal cohesion and external marginalization.

The nascent study of subcultural formations would continue beyond the Chicago School, and shift focus toward the formation of ‘outsider’ cultures with the publication of Albert Cohen’s (1955) *Delinquent Boys: The Culture of the Gang* and Howard Becker’s (1965) *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance*; each of which launched inquiries into the ‘deviant’ habits subculturalists adopted to demonstrate (and celebrate) their exteriority to ‘conventional’ society. One of the first theorists to argue for the legitimacy of the concept of subculture, Cohen argues that increased rates of immigration and a failing English economy incited the emergence of ‘Skinhead’ gangs’ among underemployed working-class Caucasian youth. Characterizing skinheads as a group whose participants neither approved of the changing landscape of British society nor perceived that they would hold a respectable position within it, Cohen deduced that the group emerged as a “subcultural response” (p. 59) to the dissolution of the traditional rites of working class culture. Cohen identified popular Skinhead practices, such as the aesthetic adoption of militaristic garb and the organized leisure practice of ‘Paki-bashing,’ as the ill-advised means through which these youth could protest their dissolving sense of community while vying to extract self-worth from activities that were (and, in the case of calculated racially-motivated violence, ought to be) condemned by the wider society.

Picking up on similar themes while studying the social organization of the musicians and aficionados populating the Chicago Jazz scene in the mid-20th century, Becker suggests that the adoption of such deviant practices as marijuana and opiate use served two notable functions: they allowed deviant groups a practice through which to signal their contempt for dominant social values and conventions while celebrating drug use as a sign of group inclusivity. Beyond advancing one of the earliest and most renowned sociological explorations of what could subsequently be termed a music-based subculture, Becker's work characterizes a period when the study of subcultural groups was the domain of criminologists and deviance scholars.

2.3.1) Subculture and Class: Neo-Marxist Accounts of Subculture

Both reggae and punk rock are created within the contexts of subcultures which are themselves produced in response to specific historical conditions. This response embodies a Refusal: it begins with a movement away from consensus (and in Western democracies, the consensus is sacred). It is the unwelcome revelation of difference which draws down upon the members of a subculture hostility, derision, 'white and dumb rages'. (Hebdige, 1979: 132)

Following the establishment of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) at the University of Birmingham in mid-1960s England, subcultural studies began to frame the subject of youth subcultural formations in a more positive light. In lieu of characterizing youth

subcultural groups such as the Teddy Boys, the Rockers and the Mods as adolescent groups prone to celebrating acts of deviance in response to unsavory social changes, theorists such as Hebdige (1979), Clark (2006) and Hall and Jefferson (2006) approached youth subcultural formations as movements, among groups of impoverished and socially disempowered adolescents, to critique the mainstream culture through the adoption of nonconformist ideologies, practices and styles. Guided by the perspective that subcultural dress and leisure activities could be ‘read’ as a symbolic condemnation of the dominant social order, the Birmingham theorists characterized youth subcultural participation as a means of entering into a critical ‘dialogue’ with the wider society. In lieu of suggesting that subcultures afforded participants the ability to lash out against those social changes perceived to be threatening traditional ways of life, the Birmingham Theorists instead interpreted subcultural style and practice as a means through which youth could criticize and challenge the ‘commonsensicality’ of a social order that appeared to further reproduce their social marginality. While the Birmingham theorists noted that the subcultural affront against the unchallenged ascendancy of traditional Western values would never transgress the realm of the symbolic (as subcultural practice would simply register as deviance among the intended recipients of the message), they nonetheless characterized youth subculture as less a reactionary response to change than a commendable (though ineffectual) initiative to instigate and guide proactive social change.

It is during this period that Dick Hebdige’s (1979) *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* advances the first sociological investigation of punk. Correlating the impetus of punk with cross-cultural pollination and the Rastafarian tradition of infusing music with socio-political themes, Hebdige examined how tropes in punk fashion symbolized an adolescent dissatisfaction with the conventions of mainstream culture. Noting that subcultures “express...a fundamental

tension between those in power and those condemned to subordinate positions and second class lives” (1979: 132), Hebdige interprets trends in punk dress as a form of “speech which offends the ‘silent majority [... and] challenges the principles of unity and cohesion, [and] contradicts the myth of [social] consensus” (18). By this logic, the incorporation of the safety pin and bondage wear into punk style could be interpreted not only as accessories meant to shock and revolt, but also as a refusal of dominant sexual mores and implied cultural narratives decreeing it ‘proper’ to perpetuate the institution of the family.

Nevertheless, Hebdige noted that the difficulty inherent in explaining some elements of punk fashion – most notably, the adoption of the swastika – could signal that those participating in punk dress may sometimes be unaware of the semiotic function of their wardrobes. Faced with the prospect that punk subculturalists might not share a consensus (or awareness) of what punk style meant to ‘say’, Hebdige concedes that “the key to punk style remains elusive. Instead of arriving at the point where we can begin to make sense of the style, we have reached the very place where meaning itself evaporates” (117). Drawing his analysis to a close with an observation that would create considerable anxiety for future generations of punk subculturalists, Hebdige concedes that the significance of punk style would “simultaneously [be] rendered ‘explicable’ and meaningless” when the subculture inevitably “[moved] through a cycle of resistance and diffusion...as the ‘secret’ objects of subcultural style...[are] stripped of [their] unwholesome connotations [and become] fit for public consumption” (130).

2.3.2) The Fluidity of Youth Identity: Post-Subcultural Theory

Post-subculturalists no longer have any sense of subcultural 'authenticity' where inception is rooted in particular socio-temporal contexts and tied to underlying structural relations...this enables post-subculturalists to engage in 'style surfing' ...to move quickly and freely from one style to another as they wish...they do not have to worry about contradictions between their selected subcultural identities, for there are no rules, there is no authenticity, no ideological commitment, merely a stylistic game to be played. (Muggleton, 2000: 47)

Within the following decade, the publication of Kathryn Fox's (1987) *Real Punks and Pretenders: The Social Organization of a Counterculture* would challenge many of the bedrock assumptions of the Birmingham school. Conducting research with about thirty subcultural participants at various "famous punk hangouts" within an unidentified American city, Fox describes a highly stratified subcultural community with little in the way of a discernible shared belief system. Instead, Fox reports that the subculture's ranks were divided into factions on the basis of various considerations, including the degree to which one committed to 'opting out' of mainstream social conventions and the extent of a participant's commitment to endorsing certain conventions in nonconformist punk fashion and ideology. Fox notes the process through which the members of this subcultural collective discursively strove to compare and contrast the legitimate standing of its' members on the basis of their categorization as 'hardcore punks', 'softcore punks' or 'preppie punks'. Though the smallest group in terms of numbers, 'hardcore punks' are described by Fox as those who "believed in and espoused the virtues and ideology of the counterculture" which, though "ambiguous at best... included a distinctly antiestablishment, anarchistic sentiment" (p. 352). Functioning as the self-described vanguard of authentic punk

subcultural participation, the hardcore punks claimed superiority over those ‘softcore punks’ accused of being less committed to the more radical principles of punk life. Both the hardcore and softcore punks, in turn, were found to chastise the ‘preppie punks’; a sub-group suspected of adopting punk style while neglecting to accept punk values and beliefs. In sum, Fox shows that the punk subculture is less an ideologically unified community than a fractured collection of groups with different approaches as to what ‘true punk’ is, as well as variant means of assuming, broadcasting, and striving to reinforce the legitimacy of their own self-authenticated ‘punk’ identities.

In noting how each splinter group measured their status against the perceived failings of other supposedly inferior subcultural populations, Fox rendered explicit the processes through which punk communities celebrate difference and internal division (as opposed to shared traits and communal unity). This focus foreshadowed the so-called ‘postmodern turn’ within the discipline of subcultural studies. Postmodern social theories generally speak to the processes through which conventional means of establishing ‘truth’ and ‘meaning’ have become unstable in the wake of increasing individualism (Bauman, 2000), the social horrors born of scientific progress (Lyotard, 1984) and doubts as to whether the highly interpretive nature of common symbols ensure that we can inhabit one objectively shared ‘reality’ (Baudrillard, 1983). The 1990s witnessed a process through which the growing popularity of the postmodern orientation contributed to the emergence of a ‘post-subcultural’ tradition of sociological theory which, though not without its critics, has arguably become the dominant framework for analyzing youth subcultures since the mid-1990s.

Anchored by the presupposition that modern subculturalists constantly “move between different sites of collective expression” (Bennett, 1999: 606), post-subcultural scholars approach

subcultures as fluid spheres wherein participants can eschew traditional class, ethnic, and faith-based identities for the sake of adopting impermanent personas meant to reflect their evolving cultural interests (Chaney, 1999) and tastes in consumer goods (Redhead, 1990). By suggesting that the function of subcultural spaces allow participants to 'play' with different identities as opposed to wholeheartedly committing to them, post-subcultural theorists argue that modern subcultures lack the degree of ideological content and the permanence of membership required to warrant recognition as substantive communities.

Written in part as a critical response to Hebdige's semiotic reading of punk fashion, David Muggleton's (2000) *Inside Subculture: The Postmodern Meaning of Style* is arguably the most renowned post-subcultural analysis of punk. Conceptualizing subcultures as "manifestations of self-expression, individual autonomy and cultural diversity" (2000: 167), Muggleton's research collects interviews with punk subculturalists in order to investigate whether such communities contain the characteristics of 'postmodern subcultures,' including the presence of participants who "display a superficial and transient attachment to any one style, [celebrate] stylistic mobility [and] weakened boundaries between different subcultures" and predicate their participation on "a celebratory attitude towards style, fashion and the media" as opposed to "a normative or political gesture of resistance" (53). While Muggleton notes the presence of "a postmodern sensibility" in terms of the myriad stylistic tendencies among the punk participants with whom he spoke, he nonetheless concedes that:

There is no evidence here of some of the more excessive postmodernist claims...[participants did not] regard themselves as an ironic parody, celebrating their own lack of authenticity and the superficiality of an image-saturated culture.

On the contrary, attitudes were held to be more important than style, while appearance transformation was anchored in a gradually evolving sense of self (2000: 158).

2.4) The Significance of Diverging Subcultural Methodologies

While debates surrounding the continued use of the concept of subculture are acrimonious, they are not the sole contributors to the fractious nature of the field. As Sarah Thornton (1997) notes, the divergent methods through which different factions of subcultural researchers commonly attempt to understand youth subculture are equally problematic. Thornton notes the presence of,

...a productive tension between sociological/anthropological approaches and textual/semiotic approaches to subcultures. This distinction is both methodological and theoretical. At the sociological end of the continuum, research has tended to be done through participant observation and written up as ethnographies, whereas at the cultural studies end of the spectrum, scholars have tended to submit subcultural forms (like clothes or music) to varieties of textual analysis. At one end, more attention has been paid to issues of organization and interaction; at the other, writers have concentrated on symbols and meanings (Thornton, 1997: 6-7).

Thornton's observations suggest that the acrimonious nature of the field of subcultural studies stems from a process whereby two *separate* paradigms of subcultural theory have arisen to explain two *separate* dimensions of subcultural participation. While cultural studies focus on the shared values that instigate adolescent subcultural forms of social protest, post-subcultural research investigates the subjective, and creative agency, of individual participants. Thornton's statement is especially relevant to the sociological study of punk. While Hebdige and Muggleton each concentrate on punk subcultural symbols and meanings (or, in the latter's case, symbols and their perceived lack of meaning), a plethora of researchers have followed Fox's lead in trying to understand how participant interaction leads to the establishment of the values and conventions that punk 'style' is meant to refer back upon and reinforce. Following Fox, Widdicombe and Wooffitt (1990,1995) examine the manner in which punk subculturalists marginalize and stigmatize perceived-to-be 'inferior' fellow participants by constructing and reinforcing expectations of punk 'authenticity' against which the practices of fledgling members are measured and compared. But from where do these conventions emerge? Thornton's (1996) own analysis of English clubbing subcultures posits that subcultural practices are largely inspired by an entertainment media that "[baptizes] scenes and [generates] the self-consciousness required to maintain cultural distinctions" (151).¹ As my analysis demonstrates, I agree with Thornton's perspective that mass media contribute much toward the processes through which fledgling punk subculturalists initially form an understanding about what taking on a punk identity represents and entails. That said, the perspective that youth subcultural groups are

¹Much sociological research has examined the role of the music press in popularizing conventions of 'proper' punk subcultural practice (Finnegan, 2003; Moore, 2007; Daschuk, 2011). Others, examining the shifting nature of punk subcultural participation and the emergence of web-mediated subcultural spaces, suggest that music websites and discussion forums now host the subcultural discussions through which conventions are rendered proper (Hodkinson, 2007; Nogic & Riley, 2007) and the authenticity of fellow members is scrutinized and discursively punished (Daschuk, 2010).

primarily shaped and granted constitution through their mass mediated representation fails to take stock of the influence of the musical forms around which many adolescent movements initially emerge.

I would also argue that this tendency to strive to 'make sense' of punk practice and aesthetics without paying attention to the potential influences of the artistic medium might be held accountable for many of the difficulties which Hebdige himself encountered in his semiological analysis of punk aesthetics. Consider, for example, Hebdige's self-admitted difficulty in applying his semiological analysis of punk fashion to understanding the use of the swastika. Though suggesting a range of possible but unsubstantiated influences – including the appropriation of David Bowie's fashion sense to “the punks' interest in a decadent and evil Germany” (1979: 116) – Hebdige ultimately concedes that the symbol was most likely adopted simply because “it was guaranteed to shock” and admits having “reached the very place where meaning evaporates” (1979: 116-117). Hence, a purely semiological reading of the swastika's absorption into punk fashion implies that ‘punk’ merely arose as a way for participants to reap negative attention from the parent culture by any means necessary; to shock and offend for the sake of being shocking and offensive. Nowhere does Hebdige consider the Swastika's initial incorporation into the styles and music of American punk rock acts such as the Dead Boys and the Heartbreakers, nor the strong possibility that Sex boutique operator Malcolm McLaren's short tenure as manager of the New York Dolls instigated the symbol's subsequent absorption into English punk fashion (McNeil and McCain, 2006). Hebdige curiously also fails to consider the influence of *Sex* clothing designer Vivian Westwood, even despite having previously linked Westwood's philosophy of ‘confrontation dressing’ to the process whereby “objects borrowed from the most sordid of contexts found a place in the punks' ensembles” (1979:107). Finally,

Hebdige barely considers the influence of the interpersonal power dynamics which subsequent writers, including Savage (1991) and Gray (2004), describe as central in the development of the English punk movement, or the possibility that English punk luminaries such as Sid Vicious and Siouxi Sioux may have adorned the swastika simply because McLaren and Westwood instructed them to do so. Indeed, McLaren's intentions to have the Sex Pistols' build a national profile (and platinum record sales) on the strength of bad press and spectacle alone is well documented in the autobiographical accounts of those who participated with the fledgling punk scene during that time. The fact that punk fashion was largely inspired by American tendencies in dress, produced by Westwood, and marketed by McLaren, brings Hebdige's account of how 'the punks' were collectively attempting to 'speak' through the development of 'their style' into question. I would contend that the assumption that subcultures are best understood by choosing one of two seemingly mutually exclusive approaches prohibits a fully nuanced understanding of the inter-relationship between the manner in which subcultural groups collectively organize and the systems of signification to which members contribute.

My inquiry into the culture of punk rock artistic production accredits the centrality of ideology *and* the imperative of identity empowerment. For this reason, I employ a Bourdieuan theoretical lense as a suitable 'middle range' from which to advance two arguments. First, the 'collective' process of codifying punk artistic ideology is rife with individualistic competition for status, recognition and the authoritative power to speak. Second, the individualistic processes through which these same actors develop their seemingly innate punk artistic sensibilities are, likewise, highly influenced by collective ideology. While I further elaborate upon the use of a Bourdieuan analytical framework in chapter four, I next wish to consider the ideological dimension of the punk rock artistic medium. I identify two dominant trends in punk artistic

ideology, and demonstrate how the contrasting artistic logics which they promote share linkages with contrasting trends in neo-Marxist theory. Finally, I further demonstrate how neo-marxian theory aids us in understanding, and analyzing, the significant relationship between ideology and processes of identity-building.

Chapter Three. Neo-Marxism and Punk Artistic Ideology: Hegemony, The Culture Industry, and Interpellation.

They figured out a long time ago that it is much easier to control people when we're all watching the same TV shows, listening to the same radio stations, going to the same movies, looking at the same billboards, eating the same food and speaking the same language.

(Leftover Crack, "Clear Channel (Fuck Off)"

Fuck World Trade, 2004; Alternative Tentacles Records)

3.1) Introduction

Released in 2001, Don Letts' documentary *The Clash: Westway to the World* finds the former members of the iconic English punk rock act reflecting upon the group's history. In one particularly interesting scene, Clash vocalist and guitarist Joe Strummer recounts the inspiration behind the song 'White Riot'; arguably one of the most significant songs included on their 1977 self-titled debut album. As Strummer notes, by 1976, London's Jamaican immigrants had taken to conducting an annual carnival in the neighborhood of Notting Hill for the purpose of celebrating their shared heritage. At the time, relations between England's Jamaican community and the English authorities had become particularly strained in the lead-up to the Notting Hill carnival, as "there had been some very heavy police pressure on the black community" (*Westway To The World*, 2001). As Strummer, bassist Paul Simonon and band manager Bernie Rhodes

were taking in the festivities, the trio would witness police, armed with riot gear, descending upon the carnival for no perceivable reason. As Strummer recalls,

We were there at the very first throw of the first brick... All hell broke loose, and I mean hell [...] this was one time where people kind of went, we've had enough, and we're going to say so now. And that's what gave rise to the song White Riot, because, we participated in the riot, but I was aware all the time that it was a Black people's riot, i.e., they had more of an axe to grind, and they had the guts to do something physical about it.

(Strummer, quoted in the 2001 Don Letts documentary *Westway To The World*)

Inspired by immigrant solidarity during the conflict, Strummer would go on to pen the song “White Riot” in hopes of instigating a similar sense of courage, and a willingness to revolt, among the Caucasian under classes of England:

White riot - I wanna riot / White riot - a riot of my own
Black people gotta lot a problems / But they don't mind throwing a brick
White people go to school / Where they teach you how to be thick
An' everybody's doing / Just what they're told to / An' nobody wants to go to jail!
All the power's in the hands / Of people rich enough to buy it
While we walk the street / Too chicken to even try it
Are you taking over / or are you taking orders? Are you going backwards / Or are you
going forwards?

(The Clash, "White Riot".

As Strummer would later concede, "In its clumsy way [the song is] trying to say to white people, if we're going to do anything, we're going to have to become anarchists or activists, we can't just sit around and be pummeled by society, or plastered over" (Strummer et al., 2009: 104). In lieu of simply advocating that England's underclass Caucasian population ought to engage in the direct forms of protest and resistance employed in the Notting Hill community, however, Strummer's "White Riot" lyrics strive to contextualize the cultural practices through which the ideological placidity of the white working class is maintained: In part, by virtue of a mainstream education system designed to prevent critical thinking and, perhaps more onerously yet, a social system which operates in the interests of those 'rich enough' to 'buy' this power. Above all else, the song "White Riot" attempts to inspire listeners to think critically regarding the state of systemic class inequalities while, at the same time, effectively challenging them to take up more practical forms of revolt and resistance in the wake of advancing abuses and repression.

The sentiments extended through the song resemble very closely many of the central assumptions of Marxist theory: that social populations with economic power shape laws to protect and reinforce their own interests; that mainstream education is designed to prohibit critical thinking and, finally, that such inequitable social relations were highly unlikely to change unless members of the under classes could band together and collectively challenge the perpetuation of such 'status quo' arrangements. Subsequent generations of punk rock artists - many of whom I consider throughout - also tailored their artistry toward both a critical analysis of the Western class system and imploring their audiences to engage in some form of practical resistance. I feel that the degree to which these artists echo the sentiments of Marxian and Neo-

Marxian social theorists, as highlighted elsewhere (Hebdige, 1978; Hall & Jefferson, 1978) suggests that Marxist social thought and the medium of punk rock artistry constitute ideological bedfellows, with artists popularizing these ideas to general (and primarily adolescent) audiences.

My goals with this chapter are as follows. First, following a brief introduction to neo-Marxian social theory, I argue for close linkages between contrasting forms of punk artistic ideology and the observations of theorists including Antonio Gramsci, Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno. Though each focuses on different aspects of the cultural means through which class-based social inequality is reinforced, they collectively contribute important (and conflicting) observations, not only on the potential for art to serve as an engine for the emergence of new ideologies and social change movements, but also on those features of the mainstream ‘culture industry’ which serve to impede any such potential. Having outlined the significant distinctions between these dueling forms of punk artistic ideology, I briefly consider additional neo-Marxist perspectives regarding the relationship between ideology and the formation of identity, as well as methodologies through which to discern the influence of ideologies through semiotic and discursive analysis.

3.2) Ideology and Neo-Marxist Theory

The influential works of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels have had a great impact on sociological understandings of the function (and source) of ideology. Arguing that the development of capitalist industrial relations fundamentally altered patterns of social organization by dividing populations into distinct ‘classes’ (the bourgeoisie and proletariat), the pair conceptualized ideology as the class-situated beliefs and value-systems that shape how

social actors perceive of the world around them. Marx and Engels argue, however, that ideology can also be recognized as a tool with which the social and economic dominance of the elite class is maintained through shaping the “ruling ideas” (1970 [1947]: 64) of a society. Positing that institutions such as law and organized religion allot the ‘ideologists’ of the socially privileged class jurisdiction over processes of ‘intellectual production’ (the ability to shape and popularize ideas and value systems), Marx and Engels argue that socially prevalent ideologies are constructed and popularized as a means of promoting complacency amongst the masses in the face of their continued social disempowerment.

Marx and Engels contend that those social institutions which grant human interaction pattern, convention and predictability (such as the courts and justice system, the education system and organized religion) are designed to protect the authority of the ruling classes and perpetuate exploitative class relations. As the interests of the dominant social classes serve as the bedrock for those institutions through which various dimensions of social life maintain intelligibility and order, Marx and Engels suggest that accepting the social authority of these institutions amplifies the propertied class's capacity to shape how the proletariat perceive of the world around them, as “...the class which is the ruling material force of society is at the same time its ruling intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it” (1970: 64). As early exposure to these institutions shapes our perception of ‘how the world works’ and the difference between proper and improper conduct, Marx and Engels suggest that we are conditioned to accept uncritically the ‘received wisdom’ of our teachers, spiritual leaders, and authority figures as gospel truth. Further, those who control the content of the information

presented through education, judicial, and religious systems hold power to shape how we perceive the world around us.

Notably, the publication for which the pair are most renowned – *The Communist Manifesto* (2004 [1848]) – exudes a guarded optimism that the proletariat would inevitably come to recognize their systemic exploitation. Advocating for the “formation of the proletariat into a class, overthrow of bourgeoisie rule [and the] conquest of political power by the proletariat” (2004: 72), Marx and Engels suggest that, rather than maintaining an economic system wherein the proletariat are forced to endure the exploitation of the property owner, the mobilization of the working class would lead to a new system where gross profits are shared equally among those who contribute to the production of goods. This movement would constitute the praxis whereby the proletariat take practical actions to end their marginalization and collectively devise a new means of maintaining equitable social relations. Marx and Engels forecast that this would occur once the gap between the rich and poor becomes so wide as to forfeit any ideological justification, such that the proletariat will come to recognize how the system contributes to their exploitation and, in turn, begin to recognize and advocate for their own shared, class-based interests.

The social theory of Marx and Engels serves as the bedrock upon which a range of subsequent theorists would situate their own theoretical observations. Beyond modifying the tenets of Marxist theory to account for emergent trends in socio-political organization and the shifting nature of industrial societies, Western Marxist scholars have concerned themselves with why economic collapse, in countries like Germany and Italy, led to popular movements toward fascism rather than communism. Gramsci, Horkheimer and Adorno, considered below, each fell victim to the progress of fascism: Mussolini had Gramsci committed to life imprisonment on the

basis of his ties with the Italian communist party, and Adorno and Horkheimer were forced to flee to the United States to avoid capture themselves. Against this context, each theorist examined different aspects of the processes through which mass publics are invited to ‘buy in’ to economic remedies put forth by the likes of Mussolini and Hitler, both in spite of the reprehensible nature of those remedies and the fact that such publics merely continued to prop up a political and economic system that contributed to their social and political marginalization.

3.3) Antonio Gramsci and Hegemony

Antonio Gramsci’s (2008 [1971]) analysis of how the false consciousness of the Italian masses facilitated the rise of Italian fascism argues for a reconsideration of the role that ideology plays in maintaining inequitable class relations. In particular, Gramsci considered how socially prevalent ideologies are implicated in proletarian ‘consent’ to the political ruling systems which actively work against their collective interests. Gramsci observes that “the supremacy of a social group manifests itself in two ways, as ‘domination’ and as ‘intellectual and moral leadership’” (2008: 57). Put another way, institutional or militaristic force alone cannot ensure the continued authority of a State: the implicit *consent* of the masses, as inspired by the ‘leadership’ qualities of those groups populating civil society, is equally necessary. Gramsci’s concept of hegemony thus references the ability of a State to retain authority, in large part, through ensuring that the majority of its people permit it to do so.

Further, hegemony can be understood not simply as the process through which the State ensures its own capacity to “[govern] with the consent of the governed,” but also as the process through which the “private organisms” of civil society “educate this consent” (2008: 259)

through cultural channels. Though Gramsci notes that “the school, at all levels, and the Church are the biggest cultural organizations in every country,” ideological consent is also secured by “the newspapers, magazines and the book trade...private educational institutions” and figures occupying professions of social and economic authority (2008: 342).

3.3.1) The Education System and the Function of Intellectuals

Gramsci identifies the education system as the primary institution through which civil society popularizes ideologies, and modes of thought, which lead the proletarian classes to accept inequitable class relations uncritically. Pointedly, Gramsci suggests that the mainstream education system is designed to inculcate proletarian youth with:

an awareness of the simple and fundamental fact that there exist objective, intractable natural laws to which man must adapt himself if he is to master them in his turn – and that there [likewise] exist social and state laws which... [must be respected] through spontaneous assent, and not merely as an external imposition – it must be a necessity recognized and proposed to themselves as freedom, and not simply the result of coercion (2008: 34).

Beyond linking mainstream education with the perpetuation of hegemony, Gramsci also implicates the content of mainstream education with a process whereby underclass populations are prohibited the ability to form a bloc of proletarian intellectuals. For Gramsci, the term ‘intellectual’ refers to those members of civil society who secure the ‘consent’ of the mass public

and, thus, serve an “organizational function” between the masses and the State by acting as “the dominant group’s ‘deputies’” (2008: 12). They are the figures perceived to hold positions of social authority, while harboring jurisdiction over the content of the cultural channels through which ideologies are dispersed and reinforced. For Gramsci, the forms of education extended to proletarian pupils aspire to dissuade them from engaging in ‘critical self-consciousness.’ As Gramsci notes,

Critical self-consciousness means, historically and politically, the creation of an elite of intellectuals. A human mass does not ‘distinguish’ itself, does not become independent in its own right without, in the widest sense, organizing itself; and there is no organization without intellectuals, that is without organizers and leaders, in other words, without the theoretical aspect of the theory-praxis nexus being distinguished concretely by the existence of a group of people ‘specialized’ in conceptual and philosophical elaboration of ideas. (2008: 334)

Gramsci implies that this is the primary reason why countries such as Italy did not begin to move away from capitalism even once, as Marx and Engels predicted, capitalism revealed its exploitative nature: they hadn’t a population of intellectuals capable of bringing a diverse collection of disenfranchised populations to recognize their commonalities, stoke the emergence of a collective will, and unite to oppose and overthrow an economic system discovered to be working against their best interests.² Gramsci thus extends a revised account of the processes

² What they did have, however, were leaders capable of using their charisma – and State force – to identify and meticulously lay the blame for the state of their Nations at the feet of ‘demonized’ social groups: left-leaning political figures in the case of Italy, the Jewish people and those deemed genetically inferior in Germany.

through which the proletarian class can come to realize their marginalization, develop a collective will and initiate praxis. Highlighting the social function of prevalent belief-systems, Gramsci reiterates that ideology shapes consciousness through “verbal conceptions” of the “common sense” nature of forms of dominance “inherited from the past and uncritically absorbed” (2008: 333). Thus, a socially prevalent ideological system “influences moral conduct and the direction of will, with varying efficacy but often powerfully enough to produce a situation in which the contradictory state of consciousness does not permit of any action, any decision or choice, and produces a condition of moral and political passivity” (2008: 333). Gramsci suggests a critical analysis of those ideologies which serve to ‘unify’ the members of a shared social class, as well as the mechanisms through which they are reinforced.

A further requirement for the eventual emergence of a proletarian intellectual bloc is “an evaluation of the degree of homogeneity, self-awareness, and organization attained by the various social classes” (2008: 181). Here, Gramsci posits that it is the task of the proletarian intellectual to advocate for the development of a shared consciousness among the members of their own class. Subsequent to initiating the recognition of class-based claims to shared identity, they might work with the intellectuals of other disempowered social groups to to advocate for the realization of inherent similarities among all underprivileged classes, in spite of perceived visible differences. Gramsci suggests that these co-ordinated efforts can contribute toward “creating a new culture...[in] making [a recognition of shared exploitation] the basis of vital action, an element of co-ordination and intellectual and moral order” (2008: 181). Ultimately, the realization of ‘common interests’ between these underclass groups contributes toward the development of a common ideology. As this ideology progressively spreads among further marginalized populations, and speaks directly to their social positions and shared experiences,

the majority of the ‘popular mass’ will eventually recognize and endorse this ideology as their own.

Gramsci ultimately posits that, once “the ruling class has lost consensus, i.e. is no longer ‘leading’ but only ‘dominant,’ exercising coercive force alone, this means precisely that the great masses have become detached from their traditional ideologies, and no longer believe what they used to believe previously” (2008: 276). It is at this point that the State must either attempt to extend its reign of domination through militaristic force or concede defeat. For Gramsci, this is “the moment in which a subaltern group becomes really autonomous and hegemonic, thus bringing into being a new form of state, we experience the concrete birth of a need to construct a new intellectual and moral order, that is, a new type of society” (2008: 388). However, it is crucial that the “unity” between the social structure and the masses as “based on traditional ideology [is] broken” for, until this occurs, “it is impossible for the new forces to arrive at a consciousness of their own independent personality” (2008: 136).

In sum, Gramsci suggests that the crucial prerequisite for the development of a widespread class consciousness is the formation of a population of ‘underclass’ intellectuals. Since they carry out the task of expanding the critical perceptions of marginalized populations in efforts to challenge the hegemony of the dominant social class, realization of a substantive movement toward praxis depends upon the proletarian intellectual’s success as organizers and, more important yet, as educators.

3.3.2) Gramscian Traditions in Punk Artistic Ideology

Against this backdrop, Gramsci's perspectives can now be brought to bear on the genesis of the punk rock artistic form. Over the course of the following chapters, I introduce readers to a lineage of punk rock artistic producers whose actions, artistic output and first-person testimonials suggest a perception of the 'purpose' of punk rock as follows: to first create music which is critical of prevalent social ideologies and the unquestioned authority of our social institutions and, second, expose this music and corresponding information to the widest possible breadth of listeners. For many (though not all) punk rock artists of this orientation, reaching the broadest population of listeners necessitates penetrating mainstream cultural dissemination channels for the sake of granting punk rock artists the ability to function as 'underclass intellectuals.' Perceiving themselves, first and foremost, as 'educators' tasked with infiltrating mainstream cultural channels and providing information meant to dissolve the 'false consciousness' plaguing underclass populations, many Gramscian punk rock ideologues seek to use the channels of mainstream ideological distribution against itself.

It is important to note, however, that Gramsci's writing largely predates the emergence of Marxist research concerned with the operations of what has popularly come to be termed the 'culture industries.' Most notably, Adorno and Horkheimer would analyze the spheres of music, film and art in arguing that emergent forms of popular entertainment maintain hegemonic exploitation. The resulting characterizations of the culture industries, in part, resemble those endorsed by a second, prevalent tradition in punk artistic ideology: that which locates punk's purpose in remaining divorced from the mainstream entertainment industry (and stringently abiding by a 'do it yourself' ethic of punk artistic production) for the sake of producing art which cannot be corrupted and co-opted by the mainstream culture industries.

3.4) Adorno and Horkheimer on the Culture Industry

Informed by the atrocities of the Second World War and Germany's apparent acquiescence to the will of the Third Reich, Adorno and Horkheimer speak to the unsavory impact that Enlightenment rationality³ had on post-war capitalist societies. Two of the most crucial affiliates of the 'Frankfurt school,'⁴ Adorno and Horkheimer provided observations on the culture industry that stem from a broader initiative to determine why abiding by principles of scientific rationality contributed not to the advancement of egalitarian human societies, but a new, technological 'brutality' as epitomized by the Holocaust. The pair's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (2002 [1947]) not only considers the processes through which scientific rationality contributed to the atrocities of the mid-20th century, but also ponders how the members of a society could allow such atrocities to take place. This latter concern leads the pair to consider the role that mainstream art and entertainment play not only in maintaining the 'false consciousness' which supports inequitable social relations, but in leaving the masses susceptible to dangerous, belief-based social movements.

Adorno and Horkheimer suggest that the products of the culture industry – including music, film, art and radio – directly contribute to the maintenance of false consciousness and the

³ The 'Enlightenment' refers to that period in human history (specifically, the 18th century) wherein 'advanced' societies began to look to scientific rationality, as opposed to religious superstition, to inform their perceptions of how the natural world operates. Whereas the natural world, and the nature of social relations therein, were formerly popularly understood through scripture and the authority of religious figures, significant scientific discoveries - by figures such as Newton and Franklin and reinforced by the philosophical musings of the likes of Voltaire, Smith and Bacon – gradually popularized an intellectual movement to suggest that the natural world could be explained and improved by scientific, as opposed to religious, principles.

⁴ The term 'Frankfurt School' refers to post-war western Marxist theorists, originally based in Germany at the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research and including Adorno and Horkheimer, among others, who focused on critiquing western capitalism with a mind to promoting processes through which new forms of praxis, and therefore consciousness, might be achieved.

perpetuation of inequitable class-based social relations. Carefully noting that the term ‘culture industry’ refers not to “something like a culture that arises spontaneously from the masses themselves” (Adorno, 1991: 98), but from the culture that has been shaped by the wide availability and popularity of mainstream entertainment companies, the pair considered the presence of a close relationship between entertainment and commerce. Having witnessed the advent of new communicative technologies (such as motion pictures and radio) in light of the Marxian assumption that “the basis on which technology [gains] power over society is the power of those whose economic position in society is the strongest” (2002: 95), Adorno and Horkheimer suggests that the culture industry functions to perpetuate hegemony and reinforce exploitative class relations. As motion picture and radio technologies render audiences as passive recipients of entertainment goods, the ability to shape culture falls entirely to those artists, producers and industry figures populating the culture industries – or, put another way, the culture industry itself.

When considering the content of the culture industry, Horkheimer and Adorno argue that “all mass culture under monopoly is identical” and, further, that “those in charge no longer take much trouble to conceal the structure [of the culture industry]...film and radio no longer need to present themselves as art. The truth that they are nothing but business is used as an ideology to legitimize the trash they intentionally produce” (2002: 95). What the pair suggest here is that culture and industry have become so indistinguishable and intertwined that the commercial function of cultural goods (as recognized by all) serves to mask the continued ideological function of entertainment products: that of informing and anchoring the viewing audience’s

perceptions of the ‘reality’ of how the world around them operates.⁵ Adorno and Horkheimer thus observe that “the purpose of all films [is]... to impress the omnipotence of capital on the hearts of expropriated job candidates as the power of their true master...regardless of the plot selected by the production directors” (2002: 98). All entertainment products, then, justify their existence through their implicit relationship to an entertainment industry assumed to abide by the principle of ‘giving the people what they want.’ It follows that the goods of the culture industry claim themselves to be the product of ‘market demand’ as a means of denying their ideological function. Passing its’ own products off as ‘harmless fluff’ allows the culture industry to saturate the entertainment landscape with standardized representations of ‘the real world,’ while propping up the notion that these products are being issued ‘at the bequest of the consumer public.’ In light of this process, Adorno and Horkheimer astutely observe that the “mentality of the public, which allegedly and actually favors the system of the culture industry, is a part of the system, not an excuse for it” (2002: 96).

The homogeneity of the world of cultural goods carries yet further implications. According to Adorno and Horkheimer, the uniformity of the themes and ‘real world’ representations advanced by the culture industry ultimately sterilize the counter-ideological capacities of art while, at the same time, condemning the imaginative critical faculties of the

⁵ To pull an example from the modern context, few today bat an eye at the debut of a new police or criminal justice procedural drama due to the market-based ideology, and by extension the presumption, that ‘this is what people want.’ Approaching a new program in the *CSI*, *NCIS* or *Law and Order* franchises as a product of ‘market demand’ veils the concurrent function whereby media subtly but surely shapes our perceptions of how the ‘criminal’ present themselves and the nature of the evils of which they are capable. As many sociologists observed (Gamson, Croteau, Hoynes & Sasson, 1992; Cuklanz & Moorti, 2006; Mann, 2006; Tyler, 2006; Schweitzer & Saks, 2007), the impact that these fictitious entertainment products have on our understandings of ‘criminals’ and the justice system can only come to be appreciated when viewers are asked to report their understandings of the ‘reality of crime’ – and often advance a representation more in keeping with prime time depictions of violence than real-world statistical findings.

general public to atrophy. Arguing that “the withering of imagination and spontaneity in the consumer of culture today need not be traced back to psychological mechanisms [but instead the fact that] the products [of the culture industry] cripple those faculties through their objective make-up” (2002: 100), Adorno and Horkheimer indict the uniformity of cultural products in a process whereby entertainment media act to alter the very cognition of the recipient audience:

The whole world is passed through the filter of the culture industry. The familiar experience of the moviegoer, who perceives the street outside as a continuation of the film he has just left, because the film seeks strictly to reproduce the world of everyday perception, has become the guideline of production. More densely its techniques duplicate empirical objects, the more easily it creates the illusion that the world outside is a seamless extension of the one that has been revealed in the cinema (2002: 99).

This passage suggests that the culture industry uniformly advances depictions of the world that are not only explicitly perceived as representations of ‘the way the world is,’ but which implicitly act to suggest that the way the world ‘is’ is the only way that the world can be. Instead of using mass entertainment products meant to lead audiences to reflect critically on issues such as social inequality and exploitation, the culture industry instead offers standardized (and intellectually sterilized) tales meant to claim that human fulfillment instead resides, for example, in quests for romance, respect and ‘success.’ The culture industry effectively placates the laboring classes by tasking them to oversee and ensure their own subservience to the taken-as-natural social order, a goal which is all the better achieved as the culture industry further ingratiates itself into the daily routines of mainstream society. The goods of the entertainment

industry function to allot audiences a culturally sanctioned means of coping with the strain of labor by effectively ‘tuning in and tuning out.’ In sum, Adorno and Horkheimer perceive a mainstream culture industry that accomplishes the task of placating the masses by offering entertainment products designed not only to ensure their passivity, but further, that their own false consciousness persists. Mainstream art produced within the sphere of the industrial capitalist culture is designed to counteract the possibility of collective dissent. This is achieved, in part, through ensuring that the goods of the culture industry instigate intellectual slumber, and a tacit allegiance to the authority of the present social order, as opposed to leading its recipients to engage in critical thought about their own position in life.

3.4.1) Frankfurtian Traditions in Punk Artistic Ideology

At this junction, it would be wise to note briefly how the perspectives of Adorno and Horkheimer, in regards to the culture industry, are prevalent within the ‘theory of co-optation’; described by Heath and Potter (2004) as a perspective, popular among ‘countercultural’ groups, which suggests that the mainstream culture industry attempts “to assimilate resistance by appropriating its symbols, evacuating their ‘revolutionary’ content and selling them back to the masses as commodities” (2004: 34). This theory’s presupposition, that working in collusion with the mainstream entertainment industry (to any extent) inherently dissolves an artist’s ability to legitimately ‘speak’ to (and on the behalf of) their intended audience, is reflected in the beliefs and actions of a second camp of punk artistic ideologues. I would term this second trend in punk artistic philosophy a ‘Frankfurt’ variety, as a long tradition of punk artists champion Adorno and Horkheimer’s central hypothesis: that ‘mainstream’ cultural channels subvert and sterilize

socially critical art while tactically breeding audiences devoid of any ability to engage critically with the products of their consumption. Frankfurtian traditions in punk rock ideology suggest that the sole spheres in which the intentions of a work of art cannot be corrupted, and wherein one may find audiences capable of critically engaging with artistic goods, are spheres of independent artistic production and distribution. For advocates of this punk ideological tradition, artistic works (and the artists themselves) must willingly commit to staunchly distancing themselves from mainstream culture industries to prevent that the ideological aims of their art be co-opted by an institution designed to ensure social passivity and hegemonic consent. In sum, I propose the longstanding presence of two discernable, contrasting ideological traditions within punk rock: one which promotes using the mainstream culture industry as a means of enlightening mass audiences; another which holds that the dissenting content of punk rock artistry can only survive by ensuring distance from, and disavowal of, mainstream media distribution channels.

Before considering additional factors which may inform the value systems and practices inherent to these punk rock ideological traditions, it is important to review the concept of ideology and the methods through which its' operation can be uncovered and analyzed. Suffice it to say, the theorists I introduce here agree that both dominant ideologies and the institutions through which they operate function in a covert manner. This suggests that the influence of ideology in shaping how we interact with the world must be deduced and analyzed through means beyond posing questions pertaining to the root source of such beliefs. Althusser and Barthes promote two distinct methodologies dedicated not only toward uncovering the operations of ideology, but better characterizing the manner in which ideology colors our perception of reality. In this following section, I consider Althusser's thoughts on the relationship between ideology and the constitution of identity, as well as Barthes' notes on the relations

between ideology and the symbols through which we come to a common recognition of a shared world.

3.5) Methods in the Analysis of Ideology: Althusser on Interpellation

As with Gramsci, Louis Althusser (2008 [1966]) wished to understand how the ideologies of the socially powerful gain authority throughout capitalist societies. Althusser identifies a number of social institutions that contribute to the enforcement of dominant belief and value-structures, highlighting how each⁶ popularize different ideologies among different populations, depending on their role within broader class relations. Those groups marginalized to “the role of the exploited” are treated to ideologies promoting blind allegiance to superiors and “a-political consciousness;” those positioned as agents of ‘exploitation’ or ‘repression’ are propelled by ideologies prompting an ability “to give orders and enforce obedience without discussion” (2008: 29-30).

For Althusser, “it is by an apprenticeship in a variety of know-how wrapped up in the massive inculcation of the ideology of the ruling class that the relations of production in a capitalist social formation, i.e. the relations of exploited to exploiters and exploiters to exploited, are largely reproduced” (2008: 30). For example, The “communications apparatus” of the mass media accomplishes this feat “by cramming every ‘citizen’ with daily doses of nationalism, chauvinism, liberalism, moralism, etc, by means of the press, the radio and television [...and] the same goes for the cultural apparatus”. Such ‘daily doses’ of chauvinism function to justify the restriction of women from achieving access to (and stature within) the field of politics, while

⁶Specifically, Althusser (2008) identifies institutions of religion, education, the family, law, politics, the press, and entertainment.

representations of ‘moralism’ extended by these institutions contribute to the disempowerment and marginalization of non-heterosexual populations. One of the central hypotheses advanced by Althusser is that ideology can be sought out and analyzed in a ‘material form’ through observing the practices through which human actors can be perceived to absorb and ‘embody’ particular beliefs and value-systems. Approaching human action as the medium through which ideology materializes, Althusser goes so far as to suggest that “there is no ideology except for concrete subjects, and this destination for ideology is only made possible by the subject: meaning, *by the category of the subject and its functioning*” (2008: 44; italics in original). This suggests social actors are the ‘subjects’ of ideology in a manner comparable to the ways populations living under monarchies perceive themselves to be ‘subjects’ of their Queen or King: expected (and oft willing) to act in accordance with royal demands.

Crucially, Althusser suggests that ideology does not operate by virtue sheer force or coercion, however, but instead operates through ‘interpellation’: the process through which social actors recognize aspects of themselves within a value or belief structure and, subsequently, internalize and embody proscriptions for proper practice. In short, social actors abide by a given ideology, quite simply, because it *speaks to them*. The ‘subjects’ do not submit to the bidding of their monarch purely under threat of the guillotine, but because they see some integral aspects of their own constitution (as member of a perceived ‘superior’ nation or culture) reflected in (or represented by) the monarch. Interpellation, then, is the manner through which ideology ‘hails’- or, appears to ‘call upon’ or ‘speak directly to’ – an individual on the basis of the ways in which they understand and conceptualize of themselves. Once having been duly ‘hailed’ by an ideology, social actors “are inserted into practices governed by the rituals of the [institutions...following which] the vast majority of (good) subjects work all right all by

themselves” (2008: 55). In so many words, individuals work in the service of ideology even though they interpret their own actions and beliefs as stemming from an ostensible ‘free will.’

For an illustrative example, consider the violent attack, committed by patriotic Englanders against Sex Pistols vocalist John Lydon (Johnny Rotten), shortly following the 1977 release of the group's infamous song, “God Save The Queen”. As Lydon recalls:

[We were] in the Pegasus, just around the corner from Wessex Studios...and as we left, we were attacked in the car park by a gang of knife-wielding yobs, who were chanting ‘We love our Queen, you bastard!’....They were just lads out for violence. I got some bad cuts from that...I jumped into the car and someone jumped after me with a machete...” (Savage, 1991: 365-366).

This passage shows how interpellation occurs. If Lydon is describing an attack perpetuated in the interest of protecting ‘the honor of the Queen’, from where did the incentive to conduct this attack come? Presumably, the Queen herself would not call upon or condone that her ‘subjects’ undertake violent actions against Lydon, in spite of the criticisms leveled against the monarchy through the song. But can the same be said for the longstanding English notion (the ideology), as passed down and perpetuated through centuries of cultural heritage and conflict, that the noble position of the monarch represents the superiority of Britain and must be respected and honored by any ‘true’ Englander? The attackers profess their actions to be in service of the Queen (‘we love our Queen’), but is it not ‘nationalism’ or ‘eurocentrism’ that ‘called’ upon this group to act? This is an excellent example of the way ideology works ‘through’ the actions of

individuals, but in a manner which may not be explicitly understood by the individuals undertaking the action itself.

3.5.1) Barthes and Semiology: Meaning, Connotation and Myth

Like Althusser, the French Marxist Roland Barthes also investigates the processes through which the ideologies of the dominant class curry hegemonic allegiance within capitalist societies. Rather than examining the processes through which ideology becomes ‘material’ through human practice, however, Barthes analyzes how the creation of meaning popularizes certain ideological positions. Barthes’ inquiry into the ways that every day objects, practices and cultural artifacts subtly reinforce privileged ideologies blend Marxist theory with semiotics: the scientific study of the ways meaning is created through the operations of linguistic and signification systems. Barthes’ most celebrated work, *Mythologies* (1986 [1957]), concerns itself “on one hand, [with] an ideological critique bearing on the language of so-called mass culture...on the other, [with] a first attempt to analyze semiologically the mechanics of this language [...] by treating ‘collective representations’ as sign-systems, one might hope to...account in detail for the mystification which transforms petit-bourgeoisie culture into a universal nature” (1986: 9). Barthes describes the practices and symbols through which we form ‘culture’, including speech, imagery and ritual, as ‘mythical speech’. This mythical speech, perpetuated by (and shaped in line with the interests of) our dominant social institutions, also promote the ideologies of the powerful. Barthes argues that covertly ideological dimensions of our shared cultural signs can be brought to light in considering how language itself is infused with mythical speech.

One example which Barthes himself advances is that of the rose. In and of itself, this rose is nothing but a flower; a plant that exists, but which does not inherently represent anything. However, should an individual pluck this rose and extend it to the recipient of their romantic affections, the rose is no longer a meaningless plant that merely exists: it has been repurposed, so to speak, as an indicator of ‘affection’, an abstract emotion. Such is the process through which human beings have facilitated the creation of collective meaning through repurposing ‘empty’ signifiers (like the rose, the maple leaf and the Beaver) to serve as signs for abstract notions (like love, nationalism and heritage) without offering signification in and of themselves.

Barthes argues that there is, further, a second level of signification whereby the rose is made to reinforce the ideologies of the dominant class, in this case through the tradition of the courtship ritual. Here, Barthes draws attention toward the prospect that the rose serves as a sign not only of affection, but of intention: on the part of one party not only to court the other, but to engage them into a process whereby the ultimate end-goal is monogamy, marriage, and the production of offspring. In this manner, then, the symbol of the rose contributes toward the maintenance of two simultaneous collective processes: the use and reinforcement of a common collective language, and the reinforcement and accreditation of the patriarchal (and heteronormative) ideologies which guide common (and conforming) social practices (such as courtship rituals). In conflating this semiological system with a ‘factual system’, the social actor, when pressed, very well may not be able to explain why the rose ‘naturally’ signifies affection or why human coupling ‘naturally’ demands different gender-based roles – ‘it just does’. Barthes contends that our very language itself is infused with, and works in the service of, the ideologies of the dominant social group. Barthes suggests that, “for the myth reader...everything happens

as if the picture naturally conjured up the concept, as if the signifier gave a foundation to the signified” (1986: 130).

Barthes notes, however, that the structure of the semiological system affords opportunity to subvert and challenge the ideological prescriptions embedded therein. This process necessitates the incorporation of a third ‘level’ of meaning which might work toward countering or criticizing the prescriptions extended at the level of myth:

Truth to tell, the best weapon against myth is perhaps to mythify it in its turn, and to produce an artificial myth: and this reconstituted myth will in fact be a mythology. Since myth robs language, why not rob myth? All that is needed is to use it as the departure point for a third semiological chain, to take its signification as the first term as a second myth. (1986: 136-137)

Within the realm of literature (and the punk rock lyricists who demand recognition as significant literary figures), one means through which it is possible to incorporate a third-order semiological chain is through the use of connotation:

Definitionally, [connotation] is a determination, a relation, an anaphora, a feature which has the power to relate itself to an anterior, ulterior, or exterior mentions, to other sites of the text (or of another text)... Analytically, connotation is determined by two spaces: a sequential space, a series of orders, a space subject to the successivity of sentences, *in which meaning proliferates by layering; and an agglomerative space, certain areas of the*

text correlating other meanings outside the material text and, with them, forming ‘nebulae’ of signifieds...Functionally, connotation, releasing the double meaning on principle, corrupts the purity of communication: it is a deliberate ‘static’, painstakingly elaborated, introduced into the fictive dialogue between author and reader, in short, a counter communication (1990 [1970]: 7-11; my italics).

Connotation, then, can be used to counteract, assail, or criticize the seemingly ‘common sense’ nature of socially prevalent ideologies and value systems. If, to draw from another example, the flag represents a territorial boundary at the level of language and the presupposition of shared claims to national identities and values at the level of myth, then the act of inverting or otherwise defacing that flag aims to subvert the symbols mythical aims. The writer thus captures myth, brings its function and contradictions out into the open, and advances any number of alternative positions that counteract or critically question the manner in which myth purports itself as ‘fact.’

3.5.2) Dead Kennedys’ “Kill the Poor”: A Semiological Analysis at Work.

I advance the following example to demonstrate the manner in which third-order semiological systems, assisted through the use of connotation, can and have operated through the medium of punk rock lyricism. What follows is a Barthesian content analysis of the Dead Kennedys song “Kill the Poor” (from their 1980 debut album *Fresh Fruit for Rotting Vegetables*). The lyrics read as follows:

Efficiency and progress is ours once more / now that we have the Neutron bomb

It's nice and quick and clean and gets things done
Away with excess enemy / but no less value to property
No sense in war but perfect sense at home

The sun beams down on a brand new day / No more welfare tax to pay
Unsightly slums gone up in flashing light
Jobless millions whisked away / at last we have more room to play
All systems go to kill the poor tonight

Gonna kill, kill, kill, kill, kill the poor
Kill, kill, kill, kill, kill the poor
Kill, kill, kill, kill, kill, the poor tonight.

(The Dead Kennedys. 1980. "Kill The Poor".

Fresh Fruit for Rotting Vegetables; Alternative Tentacles Records)

At first glance, “Kill the Poor” reads like a variation on Jonathan Swift’s (1729) *A Modest Proposal*; a famous, tongue-in-cheek argument against 18th century social engineering practices as a means of thinning out impoverished Irish populations which satirically (and sarcastically) argues for the social benefits of eating Irish children. However, subjecting the lyrics to a statement-by-statement analysis draws our attention to the types of mythical or ‘taken for granted’ associations which the lyrics first advance and, subsequently, overlay with further

layers of meaning. In effect, the song can be found to critically depict and question a number of socially prevalent ideologies and the 'mythical' status that they have been awarded within Western culture.

Efficiency and progress is ours once more / now that we have the Neutron bomb

It's nice and quick and clean and gets things done

Here, at the very onset, Biafra and the Dead Kennedys associate culturally revered qualities ('efficiency' and 'progress'; 'niceness', 'quickness', 'cleanliness' and 'action') with the Neutron Bomb: not only a symbol embodying Western scientific prowess, but military dominance within the context of international politics. Here, Biafra would appear to be towing the 'mythical' line in correlating a weapon capable of such destruction with positive qualities that have taken on a privileged status within western society

Away with excess enemy...

With but one line, Biafra touches upon perhaps the most vital rationale with which the average Westerner may be expected to accept the United State's possession of nuclear weaponry and pass it off as 'common' or 'good' sense: the feeling of safety and security extending from the country's possession of such a weapon. This lyric appears to substantiate further mythical qualities surrounding the 'meaning' (significance) of the neutron bomb within the American context: The nuclear bomb represents not only American scientific progress and military might, but also that America will go to any lengths to protect its own; America the perpetual, vigilant

guardian. Nevertheless, the myth is made to turn upon itself quite suddenly as the passage continues:

...but no less value to property / No sense in war but perfect sense at home

Here, Biafra suddenly reveals that he is not speaking of the benefits posed by possession of nuclear weaponry as it relates to all Americans; only those who hold private property. Further, the manner in which Biafra specifies that it is the 'value' of said property which serves as the paramount 'selling point' for the bomb exposes the fact that the speaker is celebrating the potential economic benefits which the use of the bomb could reap. Notably, the narrator clarifies that there is no 'sense' (i.e., no profit) to be made by using the bomb 'in war' but 'perfect sense' to use it at home. This lyric, of course, begs the question: to what 'homegrown' enemy population is Biafra's bourgeois speaker referring? The next stanza clarifies that the 'enemy' in question is *the American poor*:

The sun beams down on a brand new day / No more welfare tax to pay

Unsightly slums gone up in flashing light

Jobless millions whisked away / at last we have more room to play

All systems go to kill the poor tonight

(The Dead Kennedys. 1980. "Kill The Poor".

Fresh Fruit for Rotting Vegetables; Alternative Tentacles Records)

By the end of this first verse, Biafra has effectively called upon, and called into question, the myths which have contributed to American acceptance of nuclear weaponry while demonstrating (in an admittedly satirical manner) what (and whose) best interests are being served by both the presence of the bomb and the ideologies which facilitated its construction. The Neutron bomb is repositioned as a symbol of bourgeois greed in the context of the considerable threat such greed poses for the lower and underemployed classes in America and beyond. Above all, the song posits that those values which have become prevalent and popular among the masses of American society characteristically benefit the interests of the socially powerful to the detriment of the masses: you've been duped, the song suggests, into conceding the bourgeois powers and abilities which have not only failed to improve your standing in life, but could be used against you.

Armed with the methodologies of Althusserian performance analysis and Barthesian content analysis, it is possible to deduce the presence and operation of each variant of punk rock ideology through a consideration of both the practices that punk rock artistic producers engage with *and* the semiological content of the art which they create. I employ these methods in the interest of correlating traditions of punk rock artists with competing forms of punk artistic ideology in order to draw out the significance of key instances wherein the ideological proscriptions advanced by an artist's practices and their artistic products are incongruent. These instances, in which the content of a punk rock artistic product and the practices of the very same artistic producer indicate contrasting punk rock ideological strains, will clarify when an artist transitions from the endorsement of one punk rock ideological variant to another, and in considering the socio-historical (and punk subcultural) context in which these 'shifts' occurred.

3.6) Concluding Notes on Ideology and Punk Artistic Practice

Beyond introducing the concept of ideology, I have introduced readers to several Marxian sociological accounts through which to understand the relationships among ideology, hegemony and collective action (praxis). I have outlined the differences between what I have termed ‘Gramscian’ and ‘Frankfurt’ traditions in punk rock ideology, while taking care to note the manner in which each draws from contrasting neo-Marxist theoretical positions. I have described ‘Gramscian’ punk rock ideologues as those who take it upon themselves to serve as ‘underclass intellectuals,’ attempting to use mainstream cultural channels to expose as large a breadth of socially marginalized populations as possible to socially critical, counter-hegemonic artistic works. ‘Frankfurt’ punk rock ideologues, on the other hand, possess an inherent distrust of any culture industry that placates mass audiences, rendering socially dissenting artistic products impotent and contributing to the perpetuation of ‘false consciousness.’ Rather than vying to reach mass audiences through mainstream cultural channels, they utilize methods of independent artistic production in fashioning cultural goods to select audiences of ‘insiders’. Finally, I have argued that performance and content analysis methodologies, as informed by the works of Althusser and Barthes, can allow us to deduce an artist’s ideological allegiances through the content of their practices and the semiological dimensions of their artistic products.

It will be important to note, however, that while the practices and artistic goods of punk rock artistic producers pull inspiration from ideological perspectives regarding the ‘true’ purpose of punk rock, ideological considerations alone may not serve as the sole (or even the primary) motivator behind an artists’ actions. Throughout chapter four, I investigate the potential influence that processes of individualistic identity construction have on artists’ practices and

artistic content, and on patterns of stratification and division within communities of punk rock producers themselves.

Chapter Four. Music, Identity and Subcultural Capital

"What was once rebellion is now clearly just a social sect"
But are you just upset 'cause your own social clique has left?
Leave when you want 'cause I know that someday I will too
But I won't burn my bridges and be just another jaded fool
(Operation Ivy, "Jaded". *Energy*, 1989; Lookout! Records)

Punk is what it is - until you're getting paid
This is how I live, it's not a fucking phase
They don't understand, they think they're fucking rad
We should kill those guys! This is bullshit man!
(The Vandals, "Live Fast Diarrhea". *Live Fast Diarrhea*, 1995; Nitro Records)

4.1) Introduction

Music is an indirect force for change, because it provides an anchor against human tragedy. In this sense, it works toward a reconciled world. It can also be the direct experience of change. At certain points during some shows, the reconciled world is already here, at least in that second, in that place. Operation Ivy was very lucky to have experienced this. Those seconds reveal that the momentum that drives a subculture is more important than any particular band. The momentum is made up of all the people who stay interested, and keep their sense of urgency and hope.

(Operation Ivy, "Liner Notes"

Energy, 1989; Lookout! Records)

Despite the fact that over twenty-five years have elapsed since the 1989 release of their first and lone full-length album, *Energy*, the legacy of San Francisco's Operation Ivy has retained a lasting stature within punk subculturalist circles. Originally released on the now-defunct San Francisco based independent Lookout! Records (and reissued in the mid-2000s on the Epitaph Records subsidiary Hellcat), the continuing success of Operation Ivy cannot be correlated, as is possible with equally legendary bands (including Black Flag and the Dead Kennedys) with years of intensive touring and an expansive back-catalogue of records: Operation Ivy toured the United States only once during their two-year history, before their lone full-length album had even been released. The album continues to attract generations of new listeners, even a quarter-decade after the band's demise, in no small part due to the lyrical acumen of vocalist Jesse Michaels, whose consistent combination of lyrical eloquence and intelligence continues to set the band apart from their contemporaries. There is also, of course, the fact that Operation Ivy continuously attempted to articulate what is incredibly difficult to put into words: the manner in which the shared experience of music can contribute to the formation of a collective identity among audience members; a fleeting sense of having experienced the 'reconciled world' to which Michaels alludes above. The notion of this 'reconciled world' is granted further attention over the course of various songs; perhaps nowhere better than throughout the track "Sound System" (1989), wherein Michaels asserts that music ('somehow more than just sound'), though 'temporary [and] changing nothing in its wake', nevertheless

affords listeners the ability to ‘resist despair’, if only for ‘just a second.’ The song “Jaded” (1989) similarly finds Michaels confessing that, in spite of the sense that the “good old days” of punk rock are “far behind,” the experience of being involved with the punk rock scene, as with the music itself, “is beautiful, I would say / I wouldn’t have it any other way/ If I said different, that would be a lie.”

Considering the relationship between music consumption and the formation of identity, renowned sociologist Simon Frith (1996) echoes many aspects of Michaels’ perspective. Arguing that “the issue [for sociologists] is not how a particular piece of music or a performance reflects the people, but how it produces them, how it creates and constructs an experience [...] that we can only make sense of by taking on both a subjective and a collective identity” (1996: 109), Frith opines that music provides a sphere wherein listeners “participate in imagined forms of democracy and desire” and, further, that “music making and music listening...involve what one might call social movements. In this respect, musical pleasure is not derived from fantasy – it is not mediated by daydreams – but is experienced directly: music gives us a real experience of what the ideal could be” (1996: 123).

It is crucial to note, however, that Operation Ivy also devotes a considerable number of songs to a second recurrent lyrical theme: that of the contentious nature of the punk subculture itself. A number of stand-out Operation Ivy numbers continually revisit and problematize the intra-subcultural divisions (and the corresponding violence) that threatens the positive aspects of punk subcultural participation:

They call it a scene, I call it a disaster...

Down there you gotta have a label / just like a cattle in a stable /

knee-jerk reaction, I call it violence / why speak out when you could be silenced?

Down there out on the dance floor / too much violence, I don't want more.

(Operation Ivy, "Bad Town". *Energy*, 1989; Lookout! Records)

Nobody's got a thing against you / unless you've got something to prove /

we don't need no new set of standards / we don't need no new set of rules, man!

Heard all that shit before about stomping out any difference.

We stay stand together! Not to fight, just to exist.

(Operation Ivy, "Take Warning". *Energy*, 1989; Lookout! Records)

Any consideration of the dichotomy between the primary themes recurring throughout the Operation Ivy catalogue evokes a curious question: Why would a musical community which purports to aspire for the achievement of any such 'reconciled world' harbor, at one and the same time, such deep-seated divisions between members as to attract terms like 'faction' and 'disaster' from one of the punk artistic form's most renowned advocates? With this chapter, I examine this question by introducing the theoretical insights of Pierre Bourdieu; including his observations on the divisive nature of 'culture' and the means through which our individual identities are shaped and reinforced through competitive consumption practices. I consider the manner in which Bourdieu and, subsequently, Sarah Thornton approach cultural spaces as 'fields' which are granted shape and durability through the establishment of 'symbolic economies' and the development of notions of 'legitimate' (sub)cultural practice. Subsequently, I incorporate a brief consideration of R.W. Connell's concept of protest masculinity, and consider the linkages between gender performative theories and the processes through which many conventions for

‘proper’ punk subcultural practice would take on a decidedly hyper-masculine character. Finally, I return to Bourdieu and the notion of artistic communities contributing toward the reinforcement of ‘fields’ of artistic production. Against the backdrop of the concept of restricted artistic communities, I highlight my use of discourse analysis methodology before moving toward the central, overarching purpose of my research initiative: to entertain a series of case studies which could clarify whether the field of punk rock artistry is primarily a collective driven by ideological interests or, alternatively, simply a collective space wherein individuals each vie to establish and legitimize their personal subcultural identities.

4.2) Revisiting the Concept of Culture: The Theory of Pierre Bourdieu

While sociologists have traditionally celebrated the unifying capacities of shared cultural ascriptions (Durkheim, 1984 [1893]; Tönnies, 1955) Bourdieu sees culture as a force that actually reinforces the notion of inherent differences among social populations. Analyzing French culture of the mid-20th century, Bourdieu’s most revered work, *Distinction* (1984), suggests the presence of a relationship between an individual’s class standing (or level of educational attainment) and their ‘tastes’ in cultural goods such as foods, film, art, and music. Bourdieu notes that members of lower class standing almost uniformly possess ‘taste’ for films, works of art, or songs which are popularized, and readily available, through mainstream cultural channels. Meanwhile, members of the privileged classes generally possess tastes for ‘high’ artistic goods, including less accessible forms of art (such as abstract art) and music (preferring, for example, piano concertos over the popular music of mainstream radio). Bourdieu posits,

however, that this relationship between class standing and taste in cultural products remains unacknowledged by cultural connoisseurs themselves. When pressed to explain, for example, why one prefers popular radio over Beethoven's symphonies, or velvet portraits of dogs playing poker over the artistic works of Pollock, cultural consumers often demonstrate an inability to articulate any justification for their particular tastes and, thus, attribute them to a seemingly 'natural' inclination to prefer certain cultural goods over others.

Bourdieu contends that the relationship between class and taste is both reinforced and rendered covert by the operations of what he terms the *habitus*. Rather than assuming that we all inhabit one single, objective social reality, Bourdieu contends that different populations understand the world in unique ways based upon their early, class-situated socialization. For Bourdieu, this process leads to the development of different forms of class-specific habitus, or 'cognitive structures' which popularize particular ways of perceiving, and thus thinking and interacting within, social reality. Bourdieu suggests that one's habitus does not merely contribute to the development of class-specific tastes in cultural goods, but the promotion of different means of developing and reinforcing one's personal identity throughout the course of a lifetime. It is through the operation of the habitus, then, that social actors become familiar with the accepted practices and processes of developing and expressing personal identity, marked by their possession of certain cultural 'tastes' and consumptive habits. Indeed, Bourdieu goes so far as to suggest that "life-styles" are, in fact, "the systematic products of habitus, which, perceived in their mutual relations through the schemes of the habitus, become sign systems that are socially qualified (as 'distinguished', 'vulgar' etc.)" (1980: 172). This means that the subconscious operation of the habitus leads individuals within a shared 'class reality' to recognize and interpret the presence of 'lifestyles' (or, cultural practices) alternative to their own

as signifying the presence of *inherent difference* between social populations. Bourdieu, then, does not perceive human culture as a great unifier among diverse populations, but as contributing to the processes whereby different populations draw impressions of intrinsic difference between groups on the basis of differing cultural sensibilities. Culture, then, reinforces notions of inherent differences between social populations.

Bourdieu substantiates this notion by way of a theory which characterizes social reality as a highly fractured landscape wherein different groups inhabit symbolic, but nevertheless deeply stratified, ‘social spaces’. Defining social spaces as “[symbolic] positions which are exterior to one another and which are defined in relation to one another through their mutual exteriority and their relations of...[distance] and [hierarchy]” (2007, p. 271), Bourdieu suggests that social actors fill and reinforce these ‘social spaces’ through embodying and abiding by the distinct beliefs and practices (expectations) promoted therein. Crucially, while different practices in cultural consumption provide the basis for identifying ‘natural difference’ among social populations inhabiting stratified social spaces, it is social actors themselves who take an active role in reinforcing and codify notions of inherent difference on the basis of cultural capacities and practices.

This does not mean to suggest that tastes and identities will be rendered harmonious *within particular* pockets of social space. Rather, social spaces themselves serve as environments wherein individuals work towards establishing and reinforcing unique (and, perhaps, self-aggrandizing ‘superior’) personal identities within their *own* symbolic communities. Indeed, Bourdieu suggests that these social spaces themselves consist of stratified ‘positions’ over which actors compete. Bourdieu contends that an individuals' placement within the internal hierarchies of a social space is primarily determined on the basis of a range of

personal characteristics, including the means through which an individual signifies their own unique claims to individuality and the methods through which they seek out and consume cultural goods. However, it is also suggested that the 'value' of these positions are static and relative to one another. Though these social-spatial positions contribute toward something resembling an implicit hierarchy of claims to cultural distinction, Bourdieu asserts that the value inherent to any given position might change as individual actors attempt to improve their own standing in devising new and creative ways of making claims to distinguished identities.

For Bourdieu, then, every distinct social space entails the presence of its own 'symbolic economy' wherein the possession of personal attributes signifies the possession of different types of 'capital'. While economic capital refers to one's possession of monetary wealth, the remaining types of capital - social, symbolic, and cultural - are comparatively abstract and intangible. Bourdieu describes symbolic capital, for example, as "the acquisition of a reputation for competence and an image of respectability and honourability" (1980: 291), and social capital as the types of personal relationships, or connections, than an individual forms within their social space. Finally, and most significantly for my purposes here, cultural capital refers to one's legitimate possession of the ability to appreciate cultural goods on the basis of grounds deemed legitimate within the social space. This means that, within the same social space, a mere affinity for particular kinds of cultural products cannot be purposed to 'speak' to the uniqueness (or distinction) of one's own personal identity. Against the backdrop of the notion of cultural capital, many aspects of cultural consumption take on a symbolic significance: considerations such as the channels through which one comes to discover their cultural goods of choice, or the basis on which one justifies their affinity for particular cultural goods, become more significant than one's mere possession of any such affinity. Bourdieu suggests that the operation of this

symbolic economy inevitably leads to the formation of conventions – or, unwritten rules – which determine the ‘proper’ practices through which cultural capital can be ‘legitimately’ accumulated.

Bourdieu goes so far as to employ a game analogy which approaches these social spaces as ‘fields’ wherein actors vie to build and substantiate their individual identities in accordance with the unwritten ‘rules’ of proper conduct. Notably, there are two ‘games’ at play at one and the same time. Individually, social actors compete with those who occupy their own ‘positions’ to accrue status and authority in a manner allowing them to graduate to higher positions within the hierarchy of the field. Collectively, on the other hand, members of a shared position within a field may aspire to use their combined force to challenge the accepted conventions through which capital is valued and ‘legitimacy’ is recognized, thus effectively attempting to change the ‘rules’ of the ‘game’. In sum, while the established conventions through which to accrue capital within any given field are reinforced as social actors conform to the practices and methods of ‘position-taking’ expected therein, novel expressions of ‘position-taking’ can popularize new methods (and forcibly replace the established methods) of accruing capital and prestige.

Finally, it would be worthwhile to note the considerable commonalities which reside in the theories of Bourdieu and Gramsci’s perspectives on the maintenance of hegemony. While Gramsci posits that prevalent social ideologies masquerade as ‘common sense’ in such a manner as to deflect attention from their role in perpetuating inequitable social relations, Bourdieu suggests that the development of seemingly naturalistic, though class-informed tastes in cultural goods facilitates a form of cultural domination. As with hegemony, cultural domination ensures that social actors will reinforce the authority of the economic field by way of gravitating toward practices of cultural consumption (and identity formation) which further accredit and reinforce

dominant systems of authority and cultural control. In this sense, Gramsci's notes on the state's ability to maintain authority and Bourdieu's views on the means in which cultural fields maintain structured expectations of normalized practice and 'self-building' each speak to the significant (and oftentimes unperceived) influence that economic systems have over the processes through which we understand both 'the wider world' and 'ourselves'.

4.2.1) Sarah Thornton and Subcultural Capital

Sarah Thornton (1995) demonstrates the utility of Bourdieu's theory in understanding subcultures through her study of trends in stratification throughout the British clubbing subcultures of the mid-1990s. Thornton coins the term 'subcultural capital' to highlight the unique methods through which music-based subcultures determine and distribute status within the field of subcultural participation:

Subcultural capital confers status on its owner in the eyes of the relevant beholder [...and can] be *objectified* or *embodied*. Just as books and paintings display cultural capital in the family home...subcultural capital is objectified in the form of fashionable haircuts and well-assembled record collections. Just as cultural capital is personified in 'good' manners and urbane conversation, so subcultural capital is embodied in the form of being 'in the know', using (but not over-using) current slang and looking as if you were born to perform the latest dance styles. Both cultural and subcultural capital put a premium on the 'second nature' of their knowledges. Nothing depletes capital more than the sight of someone trying too hard (1996, p. 11-12, italics in original).

Thornton suggests that the primary means through which music-based subcultural participants accumulate subcultural capital are, first, through developing ‘tastes’ for artistic products or producers that are perceived as ‘authentic’ throughout the wider subculture and, second, by adhering to the belief-systems and tropes of ‘legitimate’ practice promoted therein. For Thornton, then, members of a subcultural group come to assess the status of any individual member within the field, in large part, on the basis of what types of cultural goods in which one chooses to ‘invest’ their affinities. Further, an equally important basis on which to gauge the ‘legitimacy’ of fellow members is through consideration of the ‘good standing’ of those resources upon which they rely for information about the ‘proper’ conventions of the subculture. It may be useful to envision the symbolic economy of subcultural capital as something of a stock-market, wherein a variety of actors continually invest or divest their affinity for cultural products in efforts to either retain or improve their position – and, thus, distinction – within the broader hierarchy of the subcultural field.

While it is important to recognize that the actions and practices of artistic producers themselves contribute to how their art will be accredited or denied recognition as ‘legitimate,’ the more distinguished participants within a subcultural field may discredit formerly taken-to-be ‘authentic’ cultural products should those participants situated throughout the lower strata within the field likewise come to profess an affinity for them. If an affinity for Black Flag is perceived as an indicator of one’s standing amongst the upper echelons of the subcultural field, for example, participants occupying the middle to lower positions may develop a similar ‘taste’ for the band based, at least in part, upon the desire to improve their own position (or status) within the collectivity. Those occupying the privileged positions within the field may react by asserting

their ‘privileged’ subcultural knowledge in applying *conditions* on the value of an affinity for Black Flag (perhaps in thus declaring that truly ‘authentic’ punks only support the Keith Morris era of the band, as opposed to the comparatively popular Henry Rollins era), or they may even devalue an affinity for Black Flag altogether (based not only upon their rising popularity, but given the ‘inferior’ nature of those gravitating toward the band). In essence, the authenticated methods of maintaining subcultural status and authority are permanently shifting, as those inhabiting the bottom rungs of the field strive to improve their status by abiding by the ‘rules’ determining subcultural distinction. Meanwhile, privileged members of the field conspire to change the rules in attempting to prevent those occupying the lower positions from usurping their claims to authority. Should the lower positions develop a collective ‘taste’ for Black Flag, those of the higher positions may very well develop a spontaneous ‘taste’ for groups of a narrower subcultural profile, while now championing a distaste for Black Flag as a marker of distinction.

In considering Bourdieu’s notion of the field and Thornton’s concept of subcultural capital, it would appear obvious that the definition of subculture advanced earlier - collectives wherein interactions among participants leads to the development and distribution of shared beliefs and values that are often reflected in group styles and affinities for entertainment products’ – requires further contextualization. While interaction among participants leads to the construction of subcultural styles and affinities for specific cultural goods, the prospect that these styles and affinities function to mark out boundaries between hierarchical strata of subculturalists robs the above definition of much of its ‘collectivist’ undertone. I would argue, nevertheless, that the presence of subcultural symbolic economies does not necessarily speak to an absence of any widely shared beliefs and values (as post-subcultural theorists may assume). Rather, I suggest that subcultures emerge and derive their structures from a precarious balance between

the shared beliefs and values which initially serve to attract their members, and the subsequent processes through which individual actors attempt to construct and demonstrate their possession of unique (or, distinct) claims to subcultural identity. Thus, the subcultural field operates in very much the same manner as the wider cultural field. Being united by ideology, yet divided by individuated quests for status and claims to authority, one cannot help but wonder which ‘aim’ takes precedence in instances wherein the unifying ideology of the field and the conventions guiding the symbolic economy of subcultural capital come into conflict with one another.

4.3) On the ‘Gendered Elephant’ in the Room: The Masculinization of the Punk Subcultural Field

I briefly wish to demonstrate how these Bourdieuan considerations might help explain the fact that, while punk subcultures have historically claimed a code “which proudly rejects societal and cultural norms”, they nevertheless “fall prey to those same traditional and conflicting notions of behavior in regards to gender and sexual identity” (Raha, 2005: xi). I would argue that the hyper-masculinism of the punk subculture, to be considered at length in chapter six, can be attributed in part to the longstanding establishment and perpetuation of a symbolic economy which accredits masculinized and potentially sexist subcultural conduct as evidence of legitimate standing. I dedicate the following section to a brief consideration of the manner in which the gender performative theories of Judith Butler and R.W. Connell parallel and reinforce those of Bourdieu, allowing for a clearer understanding of the manner in which many of the practices endorsed by key punk subcultural cultures would take on a decidedly masculine character as the artistic medium progressed.

Butler's *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (2008 [1990])

critically examines the concept of gender and, more specifically, the notion of biologically inherent sex-based gender identities. In lieu of approaching gendered identities as naturalistic extensions of one's sex (or, one's biological status as male, female or intersex), Butler instead argues that gender identities – the types of personality traits and characteristics which we collectively attribute to people on the basis of their sex – are socially constructed. Describing gender as “a construction that regularly conceals its genesis” through “the tacit collective agreement to perform, produce, and sustain discreet and polar genders” (2008: 190), Butler partially links the resiliency of the notion of gender to the operation of social institutions which socially entrench notions of gender differences and promote binary gender and heteronormative conduct. Thus, Butler suggests that gender only appears to exist as an objective reality on the basis of the gender-specific practices and characteristics that we ourselves conform to and embody on the basis of our perception of gender as an objective reality. Thus, forming gender identities operates in much the same manner as Bourdieu's habitus: ensuring that one comes to color their view of themselves, others, and the world at large through the prism of their engendered ‘realities’ while failing to appreciate that these differences are not really inherent, biologically-based differences among the sexes.

In perceiving gender as performative, Butler also advances some thoughts on the manner through which hegemonic gendered practices and identities can be challenged. Though Butler asserts that gender roles derive their social authority through “a regulated process of repetition that both conceals itself and enforces its rules,” she speaks to an appreciation of the fact that these practices are, nevertheless, elective: individuals do possess the ability (or agency) to enable “new possibilities for gender that contest the rigid codes of hierarchical binarisms” (2008: 198).

Should a critical mass of social actors devise and consistently engage in means of ‘performing’ gender in a manner meant to critique and challenge notions of inherent difference between the sexes, “then it is only within the practices of repetitive signifying that a subversion of identity becomes possible” (2008: 198-99). Granted that Butler indicts dominant social institutions in the processes through which gender differences are naturalized and reinforced, we may note a problem: While individuals may wish to engage in alternative gender performances, they nevertheless likely harbor an awareness of the potentially debilitating personal consequences which may arise from challenging gender norms in, say, the workplace, among peer groups, and so on. When the parent culture harbors hostility toward nonconformist expressions of gender identity, any substantive movement toward challenging notions of inherent gender differences may, for many, be limited to the confines of subcultural spaces.

This point is very much in keeping with the conclusions drawn by Leblanc’s (2008 [1999]) *Pretty in Punk: Girls’ Gender Resistance in a Boys’ Subculture*. Having conducted a wealth of field interviews investigating why female participants gravitate toward the punk subculture, Leblanc posits that, “by joining male-dominated youth subcultures, girls construct terms of resistance to dominant cultural models of femininity...by positioning themselves outside the mainstream, [punk girls] engage in active resistance to the prescriptions and proscriptions that overpower many contemporary adolescent girls (2008: 13). Yet, she nonetheless concedes that punk is “constructed and enacted as a discourse of masculinity: a scene that is male dominated by numerical preponderance; a subculture whose norms are constructed to be masculinist; and a group in which punk girls are constrained within male-defined gender expectations” (2008: 104-05). In spite of the fact that taking on a punk identity allows young women to challenge certain cultural models of femininity, they must nevertheless conform to

subcultural gender expectations in order to be recognized as legitimate members within the subculture itself.

4.3.1) R.W. Connell on 'Protest Masculinities'

Though Connell's study of masculinity shares a great deal with Butler's observations on the performative nature of gender identity, Connell argues that distinct gender types (or 'ways' of doing masculinity) are embodiments of performance as influenced by an actor's relationship with dominant social institutions or (transplanting a concept from Bourdieu) their location in social space. In describing gender as a 'body-reflexive' practice, Connell concedes that the specific nature of our gendered identities are largely informed by additional demographic factors, including our ethnicity, our cultural backgrounds, level of education, and our socioeconomic standing. In effect, the development of gender identity is not at all unlike the development of the habitus: each plays a significant role in determining the manner in which we not only approach social reality, but the manner in which we opt to engage in social practices and understand ourselves.

Connell's *Masculinities* (2005) suggests a schema of four distinct expressions of masculinity and correlates each with an individual's location within the broader social structure and, perhaps most importantly, the degree of social power inherent to their position in social space. For Connell, these patterns of gender performance can be perceived as composing a hierarchy of masculinities, as dependent upon the degree to which each serves to challenge or reinforce masculine ideals, social patriarchy, and the subordination of women (as well as non-heterosexual or transgendered persons). Connell observes that the most privileged

manifestations of masculine practice – which she describes as expressions of hegemonic masculinity – are embodied in the actions of upper to middle class heterosexual white males who construct their identities around notions of independence, competition, and strength. This expression of masculinity is dubbed hegemonic by virtue of the fact that conformist gender performance leads individuals to engage in actions which actively justify and perpetuate the longstanding benefits derived from being male, Caucasian, and a member of the dominating class. Those who take on hegemonic masculine identities pattern their actions in order to reinforce notions of ‘proper’ masculine practice, ensuring the perpetuation of a gender order which extends them considerable social benefits through rites of male privilege.

Those forms of masculine performance at the opposing end of the hierarchy – termed marginalized and subordinate masculinities – speak to those populations of males who are denied the benefits of patriarchy on the basis of additional demographic characteristics including ethnicity, cultural background, class standing and sexuality. Patriarchal benefits are diluted or denied for those outside of the wealthy Caucasian heterosexual.

Connell identifies one such type of marginalized masculine performance as that of a protest masculinity persona. Described as being rooted in “a pattern of motives arising from the childhood experience of powerlessness [which results] in an exaggerated claim to the potency that European culture attaches to masculinity” (p. 111), protest masculinity is “a marginalized masculinity which picks up themes of hegemonic masculinity in the society at large but reworks them in a context of poverty” (p. 114). Further,

The project of protest masculinity [develops] in a marginal class situation, where the claim to power that is central in hegemonic masculinity is constantly negated by economic and

cultural weakness. By virtue of class situation and practice, [men lose] most of the patriarchal dividend. One way to resolve this contradiction is a spectacular display, embracing the marginality and stigma and turning them to account. At the personal level, this translates as a constant concern with front or credibility. (p. 116).

Thus, the adoption of a protest masculine persona allows those who are denied the social benefits of patriarchy to adopt and embody hyper-masculine practices in order to reclaim social power through gender performative (symbolic) means. As the process of adopting a protest masculine persona effectively leads “the growing boy [to put] together a tense, freaky façade, making claim to power where there are no real resources for power” (p. 111), it also ensures that marginalized men will attempt to broadcast their status through adopting practices based around stereotypical masculine traits: expressions of strength and aggression. It is, therefore, fitting that Connell locates protest masculinity in collective practices epitomized through the emergence and continued operation of American “working-class street gangs” and the manner in which their claims to masculine bravado and aggression can be perceived as stemming from a “concern with [saving] face” and “keeping up a front” (p. 111).

How does this notion of protest masculinity link with the established conventions for deriving identity and individual status within the confines of the punk subcultural field? One constant which unites many of the flagship artists of the earliest punk rock and hardcore ‘movements’ is the fact that many shared experiences of poverty and, by extension, social disempowerment. Indeed, as underclass protest masculine identities are formed and reinforced through expressions of strength, aggression, and masculine bravado, it is not at all difficult to link the lyrical content, musical form, and stage personas of many punk and hardcore flagship

artists, to different degrees, with processes of protest masculine empowerment as a form of generating punk habitus.

4.4) From the Subcultural Participant to the Artistic Producer: Bourdieu on the Field of Cultural Production

To this point, I have already considered Bourdieu's perspective that 'fields' of cultural consumption codify notions of inherent difference among populations and inform the means through which individual claims to legitimacy of identity are assessed by the wider collective. Bourdieu endorses a similar theoretical logic when considering the operation of the field of cultural production: an enclave in social space populated by artists and others involved in the production of art (including critics, promoters, and so on). Like the field of cultural consumption, Bourdieu argues that the field of cultural production is similarly partitioned into a hierarchy of distinctive, stratified 'positions' that individuals fill on the basis of their accrued distinction as artists. Further, and crucially, Bourdieu goes so far as to characterize the field of cultural production as being partitioned into two distinct cultures of artistic production. As with the neo-Marxist theorists discussed in chapter three, Bourdieu notes a significant relationship between the production of culture and a broader 'field of power' wherein industry, politics and various strata of governance strive to facilitate the 'smooth' operation of society. Beyond institutionalizing those expectations of conduct which render social interaction intelligible and predictable, this field of power also serves as a social space wherein competing groups work to promote ideologies and policies serving their own (group or individual) interests. While "the literary and artistic field is contained within the field of power" due to the role that art and

culture play in promoting prevalent beliefs and shared values, Bourdieu nevertheless argues that the presence of distinct (and diametrically opposed) schools of artistic ideology indicate that the artistic world “[possesses] a relative autonomy with respect to [the field of power]” (1993: 37-38).

4.4.1) Conflict Among Artistic Communities: The Ideological Divide

Quite simply, Bourdieu argues that the field of artistic production consists of large-scale and restricted artistic producers, each of whom engage in the production of art in accordance with contrasting logics. Large-scale artistic producers are characterized as those who work in service of the field of power by aspiring for economic success and mainstream recognition. Restricted artistic producers, on the other hand, measure artistic status not in the accumulation of fame and profit, but by maintaining claims to artistic integrity through their refusals to cater to the expectations of the field of power. Whereas ‘large-scale’ producers accept the logic of the ‘economic world’ and vie for claims to social power through conventional means of achieving success, ‘restricted’ producers assess artistic legitimacy in according to a logic that ‘reverses’ that of the economic world: status as a legitimate artist is confirmed by one’s resolve in *refusing* to cater to large audiences.⁷

Crucially, then, the field of cultural production retains its’ claims to autonomy from the field of power on the basis of the concurrent operation of two oppositional artistic logics.

⁷ Bourdieu characterizes the manner in which differing artistic logics contribute to different sensibilities against which to measure artistic status in contrasting popular novelists and poets. As high book sales signify success among the former and low book sales signify integrity among the latter, it is no wonder that poets are regarded as artistic failures among popular novelists and popular novelists considered insincere opportunists among poets.

However, Bourdieu contends that large-scale and restricted producers do share in one significant tendency: each tailor their artistic practices toward the overarching goal of bringing the entire artistic field to the logic of their preference. Bourdieu ultimately approaches the field of cultural production as a ‘field of struggles’ wherein large-scale and restricted producers compete to have their preferred artistic philosophy achieve hegemony throughout the entire field. In sum, then, the field of cultural production houses distinct groups of artistic producers, each of which strives to recreate the ‘logic’ of the field in the image of the symbolic economies through which they derive status within their own enclave of artistic producers.

4.4.2) Conflict Within Artistic Communities: ‘Genre’ and the Generational Divide

Bourdieu also speaks to the means through which members within these distinct artistic communities internally codify and reinforce means upon which to assess credibility among their own ranks. Concerning the field of restricted production, Bourdieu identifies the perpetual clash between ‘artistic generations’ as a trustworthy source of conflict and hierarchical reorganization. Whereas large-scale artistic producers accumulate status and claims to distinction by creating products catering to mass audiences, the conventions of status distribution employed among restricted artistic producers are much more amenable to the creative whims of fledgling producers “who cannot make their own mark [within the field] without pushing into the past those who have an interest in stopping the clock, eternalizing the present state of things” (1993: 60). Should new restricted artistic producers wish to vie for status and challenge the authority of the old guard, they must do so by means of “winning recognition...of one’s difference from

other producers...[and], by the same token, creating a new position, ahead of the positions already occupied, in the vanguard” (1993: 60).

Bourdieu links this perpetual struggle between longstanding restricted producers and the ‘new guard’ of artists with the creation of the ‘artistic genre.’ According to Bourdieu, the concept of the genre “widens the gap between the two sub-fields and leads to the increasing autonomization of the sub-field of restricted production” (1993: 53) through the emergence and use of “practical classifying tools which create resemblances and differences by naming them...[facilitating one’s] struggle for recognition...and [functioning] as emblems which distinguish galleries, groups and artists and therefore the products they make or sell” (106). Though Bourdieu notes that generic classifiers such as ‘drama’, ‘poetry’ and the ‘novel’ originally served (and continue to serve) as a means by which artistic producers and their products can be categorized and placed into the hierarchical order of ‘high’ and ‘low’ art, the creation of new genres entails one ‘strategy’ through which restricted producers create new (and more prestigious) positions within the field. The emergence of a new genre, and its new palette of works, threatens to interrupt the established hierarchy among artists and endanger the conventions through which status and authority are recognized and accredited.

The revision or reinvention of the artistic genre is one of the primary weapons through which the struggle between established artists and the new generation - which Bourdieu effectively describes as a struggle “between cultural orthodoxy and heresy” (1993: 53) - persists. However, as an artistic genre cannot effectively take root within an artistic field until someone (be they artist, industry or press) codifies the new entity by authoritatively identifying, christening, and describing it. Bourdieu here stresses the significant influence of actors beyond the artists themselves. Those participating within the industry of music production and

distribution, and especially the music press, also compete for claims to status and superiority. Thus, Bourdieu suggests that any attempt to understand the struggles which serve to structure the conventions, values, and practices within the field of cultural production need be mindful that,

...works of art exist as symbolic objects only if they are known and recognized...as [socially instituted] works of art and received by spectators capable of knowing and recognizing them as such. [therefore,] the sociology of art and literature has to take as its object not only the material production but also the *symbolic production* of the work, i.e. the production of the value of the work or, which amounts to the same thing, of *belief* in the value of the work. It therefore has to consider as contributing to production not only the direct producers of the work in its materiality (artists, writers, etc.) but also *the producers of the meaning and value of the work* - critics, publishers, gallery directors and the whole set of agents whose combined efforts produce consumers capable of knowing and recognizing the work of art as such. (1993: 37, my italics)

Bourdieu suggests that those who hold jurisdiction over the discourse concerning restricted artistic products ultimately hold the ability to legitimize art and construct, or substantiate, the notion of new 'genres.' This proposition demands a closer examination of the concept of 'discourse', as well as the interrelationship among discourse, the production of knowledge, and power. To that end, I now consider Stuart Hall's notes on the production and significance of prevalent discourses, followed by a brief introduction to discourse analysis methodology.

4.5) Discourse and the Construction of Social Realities

As Hall notes, “the work of establishing new kinds of ‘knowledge’ about problematic features of social or political life is accomplished through the mediation of language: the transactions of public ‘language’ are the specific [processes] through which such new ‘knowledge’ is objectivated” (1974: 276). Discourse can thus be understood, in part, as the language, or the ‘ways of speaking’ which ensure that “we interpret the world in roughly similar ways, [and] are able to build up a shared culture of meanings and thus construct a social world which we inhabit together” (1997: 18). It is important to note, however, that discourse is not merely language: as Hall clarifies, discourse is “a system of representation [focusing] on rules and practices that produce meaningful statements and regulated discourse in different historical epochs” (1997: 44). The process of creating and popularizing a discourse on a given topic, then, is collective and necessarily takes place within the realms of communication and culture.⁸ A discourse comes to acquire ‘widespread authority,’ Hall argues, because such conventions of

⁸ A good example with which to better demonstrate and understand the manner in which certain ‘discourses’ surrounding a social group or event become popular and socially prevalent (as opposed to alternative ways of ‘speaking about’ the same group or event) involves mass media reactions to the Columbine high school shooting in Colorado in April of 1999. For those who may not recall, two high school students planned and conducted an attack on their peers and teachers, ultimately killing twelve people with assault rifles before taking their own lives. As many researchers (Altheide, 2009; Muschert, 2009; Ogle, Eckman, and Leslie, 2003), and documentary filmmaker Michael Moore (via his 2002 pseudo-documentary film, *Bowling for Columbine*) have observed, mainstream media reportage advanced a number of different theories grounded in specific discourses and meant to account for the tragedy: those centered around the high school environment and the relationship between the development of cliques and bullying practices, around the possible influences of violent video games and music (focusing primarily on the music of Marilyn Manson) and, to a lesser extent (but with increasing credibility subsequently), the wide availability and easy access to firearms within the United States. Each of these discourses, derived from particular social locations and the discursive apparatuses informing them, were pitted against each other in ensuing social debates around the cause of the tragedy. It was, once again, Moore who posited the prospect that the ‘gun control’ discourse came under the most media scrutiny and received the least media support; an observation which he correlates with the implicit political views and values which these different news agencies (and their corporate backers) support and popularize. In essence, then, the flurry of differing ‘causal’ discourses emerging in the wake of the Columbine shootings serves as an excellent example of the process through which the field of public discourse constitutes a battleground whereupon competing parties, bolstered by their authority as social ‘knowledge producers’, vie to popularize means of characterizing the social world that are in keeping with their own worldviews and collective interests.

speaking (and, therefore, thinking) flow from the very same social institutions and cultural spheres which Gramsci indicts in guaranteeing social hegemony.

In taking instances of speech and text as its research data, discourse analysis strives to highlight the manner in which a discourse produces meaning, and influences how we conceptualize reality, while extending due consideration to the manner in which discourses reinforce, challenge, resist and alter one another

4.5.1) Discourse and Intertextuality

One concept born of the discourse analysis methodology which will prove significant throughout the remainder of this study is that of intertextuality. A concept coined by Fairclough (1992), intertextuality appreciates the manner in which a text might incorporate, reinforce or challenge alternative discourses. By way of an example, consider the following excerpt of stage banter as offered up by Social Distortion vocalist Mike Ness and found on the group's 1998 album, *Live at the Roxy*:

You know, I was driving through Hollywood today and there was...that parking lot across the street from the Whiskey. About eighteen years ago we used to sit there and drink and, um...we'd get warmed up for the show. That was back at a time when society was not quite ready for this type of music. Does anyone remember those days? That's when punk rock was dangerous, right? You couldn't walk into a mall and get your little pussy pierced, or your Doc Martens boots or your crazy color for your hair. You walked down the street with blue hair, you was gonna get into a fight with about five angry construction workers,

or the local college football team, rednecks, or cops. Yeah, sometimes they kicked our ass, but you know what? Sometimes we beat the fuck out of 'em!

(Social Distortion, "Prison Bound [live]").

Live at The Roxy, 1998; Time Bomb Records.)

While Ness would appear to be speaking to the band's (to that point) twenty-year history and its links to the Hollywood punk rock scene (the album was recorded, as the title suggests, at the legendary Roxy club on Sunset Boulevard), this piece of seemingly mundane stage banter touches upon many of the discourses surrounding 'authentic' practice and membership within the North American punk and hardcore scene. Reflecting on a time when 'punk rock was dangerous' (and thus commenting on the contemporary status of punk music: it is not dangerous and, therefore, comparatively inferior to earlier permutations of punk), Ness touches upon a pair of subcultural discourses surrounding the oft-identified roots of the punk rock's supposed decline: the commodification of subcultural style (and the ease of procuring many of the tent-pole punk fashions through mainstream consumer boutiques; 'you couldn't walk into a mall...'), and the types of participants whom Ness perceives to be encroaching upon the punk rock scene (it is difficult to determine for certain whether the pejorative phrase 'get your little pussy pierced' is meant to denigrate female participants, or male participants whom Ness deems too effeminate, or the practice of seeking out mainstream methods of body modification). In any case, Ness goes on to compare the current 'safety' of punk subcultural participation with his experiences at the dawn of the subculture, when engaging in practices which are seemingly commonplace today would 'get [one] into a fight' with those groups representing the 'high' standard in Western masculinity: construction workers, football players, 'rednecks,' and police.

While conceding that these groups ‘sometimes kicked our asses’, Ness would appear to take pride in recounting how his group would sometimes ‘beat the fuck out of them’; a practice through which Ness demonstrates his own masculinity and dedication to his subcultural identity. Ness can also be perceived as engaging in the process of listing off a number of social positions which he identifies as exterior to and hostile toward the punk culture (rednecks, construction workers, football players) and, in this sense, characterizes members of these occupational groups as the ‘others’ against whom members of the culture collectively battle. Implicitly, of course, Ness advances a discourse as to the kinds of cultural, occupational or leisure groups he distinguishes as being inherent punk cultural outsiders. Thus, beyond critiquing members of the contemporary punk culture on the basis of aesthetics and consumption practices, he also claims that those who may be identified as ‘rednecks’, ‘construction workers’ and ‘college football players’ have no place in the punk culture.

Recalling Connell’s thoughts on the manner through which those possessed of a protest masculine gender identity try to assert their power through displays of aggression and force when no substantive claim to social power can be made, it is arguable that Ness means to correlate the ‘dangerous’ (and, by extension, authentic) punk rock and hardcore scene of the 1980s with a masculinity that he perceives to be absent in contemporary punk subcultural practices. These statements, though brief, offer a surprisingly multi-layered example of discursive intertextuality, as Ness draws on narratives surrounding proper expressions of punk masculinity and improper resources for punk fashion over the course of a simple reflection concerning the nature of the punk scene ‘way back when.’

4.6) Punk Ideology and Practice in the Field of Subcultural Production

Finally, it is worthwhile to revisit and tie together the concepts of subcultural ideology and the notion of the ‘field’ of subcultural production. In Chapter three, I proposed that the culture of punk rock artists plays host to two contrasting perspectives in regards to the overarching aims of punk artistry: one which tasks punk with challenging hegemony by reaching out to the broadest possible population of listeners; another which tasks punk with serving as an art form that stringently insulates itself from the mainstream culture industry. My primary aim from this point on concerns a critical consideration of the following conundrum. As discussed throughout chapter two, one tradition in punk rock ideology, following suit with Adorno and Horkheimer, regards the mainstream culture industry as an entity meant to dull the critical faculties of the general public and ensure their subservience to the established social order. A second prevalent punk ideological tradition approaches the stage of mass culture as the optimal pulpit from which to instill mass audiences with capacities for critical thought and popularize counter-hegemonic ideals. Whereas the former punk ideologists strive to separate themselves from mass culture, the latter vie to infiltrate and change the nature of the mainstream culture industry itself. It is important, however, to recall Gramsci’s assertion that any underclass intellectuals who strive to educate and unite disparate social populations can only do so if their credibility as legitimate representatives of those populations is recognized and verified by the receiving audiences themselves. This prospect, finally, brings us to the overarching research hypothesis at hand: namely, how do these contrasting traditions in punk rock ideology interact with one another within the confines of a ‘field’ that places a premium on constructing ‘authentic’ identities through divisive processes of status accumulation? How much ‘credibility’ can Gramscian punk rock intellectuals anticipate, given that infiltrating the landscape of popular

culture and reaching mass audiences reads as an offence against conventions of restricted production? Can the art form of punk rock music be approached as a potential vehicle for social change when movements toward attracting new adherents serve to threaten the longstanding conventions through which punk authenticity and authority are recognized?

The canonical history of the punk rock artistic form, as collected through the artistry and performances of the flagship groups and first-person testimonies of those ‘on the ground’, provide a history of the struggles which continue to shape the field not only between competing definitions of punk, but among participants as they vie for personal distinction within a status-based, highly exclusionary symbolic economy. I argue that the presence of such symbolic economies is easiest to detect at specific junctures over the life of the punk artistic form: periods of formation and the onset of ‘crisis points’. I consider these formative periods in examining how punk rock artistic communities oscillate between competing ideologies within different socio-cultural and generational contexts. I investigate whether the symbolic means through which members construct and assert individualistic subcultural identities ultimately hinders the potential for punk rock to support the Gramscian function of serving as a substantive counter-hegemonic force.

Chapter Five. Turning Boredom into Rebellion, Turning Rebellion into Money: Competing Knowledge Producers and the Codification of Punk.

Built into punk from the beginning was not only a tendency to self-destruction, but a short shelf-life. Despite what many of the groups professed, the movement enshrined failure: to succeed in conventional terms meant that you had failed on your own terms; to fail meant that you had succeeded (Savage, 1991: 140).

5.1) Introduction

Among the wealth of publications that attempt to narrate the genesis of the punk rock musical form, there is a near uniform tendency – as expressed by self-professed impartial witnesses (Savage, 2005 [1991]; Marcus, 1989, 1993; Grey, 2004 [1995]), fanzine publishers (Perry, 2009 [1976/77]; McNeil & McCallum, 2006), academics (Hebidge, 1979; Laing, 1985) and punk rock artists alike (Ramone & Koffman, 2000; Strummer, Jones, Simonon & Headon, 2008; Lydon, 1993) – to advance their ‘expert’ narratives in order to discount and discredit the alternative perspectives of their compatriots. Beyond indicating that debates about the ‘proper’ narrative through which to understand the emergence of punk rock remain just as contentious as those surrounding exactly what the term ‘punk’ is meant to mean, the presence of these competing genesis narratives point to a consideration which, ironically, prevents any given position from being discredited outright. Codification of the concept of punk instigated a process whereby a variety of different interest groups (or ‘knowledge producers’) used their burgeoning authority, as subcultural spokespersons, to popularize notions of ‘punk’ in keeping

with their own representations of what the movement 'ought be.' In effect, testimonies surrounding the emergence of punk, read together, contribute to a veritable melting pot of competing discourses, contradictions and tactical attempts to characterize alternative perspectives as misguided or belonging to 'illegitimate' subcultural punk artists. This is not even to speak to those debates regarding the birthplace of punk rock itself, nor those concerning what, if any, trends in popular music and artistic theory influenced the aesthetic dimensions of the so-called movement. Indeed, any given punk rock genesis narrative entails a counter-narrative, which renders any attempt to offer the definitive account of punk's emergence problematic. Recalling that these manifestations of punk culture are the very same ones around which central Birmingham theorists anchored their critical subcultural perspectives, it is curious to note post-modern elements in the processes through which punk earned codification via the competition and conflict between groups and ideological positions.

While these narratives strive to displace and contest one another, each carries a grain of truth; a fact that may shed light on the process through which the field of punk rock artistry has, from its' inception to the present day, continued to harbor competitive tensions and debates. While granting each of these competing narratives credit provides a complex tapestry of considerations, this chapter will demonstrate how the influence of numerous and equally invested interest groups – punk rock artists, but also their managers and the fanzine and mainstream media scribes who initially attempted to represent the punk phenomenon – collectively codified the notion of punk while ensuring that a clear consensus regarding what 'punk' actually entails may never be reached. Following a brief reiteration of Bourdieu's analysis of the significance and social authority of 'knowledge producers,' I consider the processes through which divergent representations of punk came to be advanced by a variety of

competing actors and information sources. These processes will then be linked with the ambiguity surrounding early representations of punk (in both the American and British contexts) in order to understand whether these punk knowledge producers were inspired to act, in part, in the interest of ensuring their ability to shape, and hold status within, an emergent punk subcultural symbolic economy. I then outline the discursive and representational processes through which different populations of punk subcultural knowledge producers strove for the authoritative ability to define and deduce ‘proper’ punk rock practice and authentic belonging. The chapter will conclude with a consideration of how these processes ultimately contributed to a populist, ‘patchwork’ representation of punk rock that incorporates (often conflicting) elements, as promoted by a diverse range of pertinent social groups: the initial wave of punk rock artists, their managers, and both the mainstream and ‘punk fanzine’ press.

5.2) Authoritative Knowledge and Pursuit of Jurisdiction over Punk

Chapter four discussed the processes through which those participating within fields of cultural production strive to construct and advance a ‘privileged’ knowledge (an authoritative discourse) surrounding artistic credibility and methods of assessing individual status within spheres of artistic production. Bourdieu notes that such processes are nowhere more susceptible to prying eyes than during codification of new artistic genres: “pseudo-concepts,” or “practical classifying tools which create resemblances and differences by naming them...[facilitate one’s] struggle for recognition...and [functioning] as emblems which distinguish galleries, groups and artists and therefore the products they make or sell” (1993: 106). For Bourdieu, the emergence of new pseudo-genres within any artistic field provides an opportunity for inhabitants to subvert the

established processes through which to amass claims to legitimacy and assess authoritative speakers on behalf of the wider artistic movement. This leads Bourdieu to approach the construction of new genres as the primary means through which the struggle between the 'established vanguard' and the 'new generations' of artistic participants perpetuates itself.

The following chapter argues that the codification of emergent 'punk rock genres' attracted the participation of a number of unique punk artists and knowledge producers. However, rather than competing for authority over the ability to challenge and change the structuration of the artistic field itself, they challenged one another for authoritative jurisdiction over the emergent pseudo-concept of 'punk rock.' The remainder of this chapter will detail a process, spanning over a decade and occurring within two distinct cultural contexts, whereby a procession of different groups attempted to take ownership of and redefine 'punk,' only to have subsequent groups enter the field with intentions of challenging their perspectives and claims to authority. Prior to doing so, however, it will be important to highlight the socio-historical context against which the first manifestation of 'punk' emerged; namely, within an American East Coast culture which appeared, at seemingly unpredictable turns, both socially engaged and politically ambivalent.

5.3) Search and Destroy: New York and the First Wave of American Punk Rock

...one finds, at the end of the fifties, a disconcerting caesura. In the West, among the intellectuals, the old passions are spent. The new generation, with no meaningful memory of these old debates, and no secure tradition to build upon, finds itself seeking new purposes within a framework of political society that has rejected, intellectually speaking,

the old apocalyptic and chiliastic visions. In the search for a 'cause', there is a deep, desperate, almost pathetic anger.

Daniel Bell, *The End of Ideology in the West* (2001 [1960]:404)

Regardless of which facet of 1960s American life one may focus on, it would seem fitting to describe the era as one of disillusionment and confusion. Beyond the looming threat of the Cold War and the potential of nuclear hostilities, the United States found its self-ascribed reputation as a progressive nation undermined by a string of political assassinations. The murders of John F. Kennedy, Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr. accumulated just as American armed forces became progressively mired in the increasingly controversial Vietnam War. If Bell, as quoted above, was correct in claiming that rationalist Western ideologies had come under question in the wake of the Holocaust, Hiroshima, and the stark new reality of the nuclear age, the events of the 1960s may have further contributed to an outbreak of widespread recognition of a chaotic and cruel world.

The 1960s also marked the initial formation of the so-called 'Hippie' subculture; a movement with distinct ideological dimensions, which included a belief that the best means of combating the harsh realities of living with the nuclear age involved opting out of conventional society, abusing narcotics, and striving toward a hedonistic utopia under the auspices of the 'free love' movement. Testimonials issued by the progenitors of punk rock on both sides of the Atlantic evidence a particular disregard for the Hippie culture and its adherents. According to noted poet and journalist Ed Sanders, the Hippie movement would attract the noted scorn of would-be punk subculturalists on the basis of their perceived lack of lumpenproletarian authenticity:

The problem with the hippies was that there developed a hostility within the counterculture itself, between those who had, like, the equivalent of a trust fund versus those who had to live by their wits...they could go back home. They could call their Mom and say, 'Get me outta here.' Whereas someone who was raised in a project on Columbia Street and was hanging out on the edge of Tompkins Square Park can't escape. Those kids don't have anywhere to go...they're trapped. (Sanders, quoted in McNeil & McCain, 2006 [1996]: 21-22)

Though some might argue, and ironically so, that this quotation could just as easily be applied to the punk subculture itself less than a decade later, Sanders articulates his displeasure with the Hippie culture in drawing upon a discourse centered around its' ideological inauthenticity: a good portion of participants, by his account, were merely masquerading as underprivileged youth and, thus, perpetuated a youth counterculture which glamorized, without faithfully reflecting, the realities of impoverished adolescent life. Further, it is often suggested that the popularity of the Hippie movement (and, to an equal extent, the types of designer narcotics which the subculture endorsed) had left an indelible mark on the forms of music which had prevalently been marketed toward adolescent consumers during that era: psychedelic and progressive (prog) rock outfits including the Grateful Dead, Jethro Tull, Genesis, and Pink Floyd. As Laing (1985) notes, the mainstream domination of these progressive rock acts not only popularized and promoted music which demanded a technical proficiency standing in contradistinction to the improvisational (and gleefully sloppy) nature of jazz and classic (pub) rock, but modified the nature of mainstream music in and of itself:

Live shows were increasingly expected to provide an exact recreation of the studio recordings, and therefore demanded large investments in extra musicians or various pieces of electronic equipment...meanwhile, the musical forms used by the bands became larger and larger. Three minute songs seemed unsuitable for the opulence and grandeur of the studio machinery and the musicians' ability to demonstrate virtuosity on guitar or keyboards. Song-cycles (concept albums) abounded, and there were lengthy instrumental pieces...The themes of the concept albums were also inflated, as groups like Pink Floyd, Yes or Genesis grappled in various ways with the mysteries of life. (Laing, 1985: 3)

As musical virtuosity and conceptual narratives became something of a prerequisite for acts aspiring for mainstream success, underclass music aficionados were denied a style of music which strove more accurately to reflect their experiences. Though Osgerby (1999) notes that "the growth in young people's disposable income [throughout the 1950s] had highlighted [youth] as a distinct cultural group with specific consumer demands [as] an array of industries scrambled to cash-in on youth spending" (1999: 157), few industries displayed much interest in marketing products to those youth populations that hadn't any disposable income to speak of. Though it would be difficult to correlate definitively the absence of an underclass adolescent culture industry and trends in their substance use and abuse, first-person accounts collected throughout McNeil and McCain's (2006 [1996]) *Please Kill Me: The Uncensored Oral History of Punk* frame drug use as a common practice through which economically marginalized youth aspired to dull their experiences or, as immortalized in the Ramones' "Now I Wanna Sniff Some Glue" (1976), simply combat boredom. As with the Jazz aficionados detailed throughout Becker's *Outsiders* (1963), the early proto-punk scene, not unlike New York's bohemian art culture itself,

seemed to celebrate drug use as a means of demarcating class and cultural boundaries, as well as a recreational pastime.

5.3.1) Warhol, Pop Art, and the Velvet Underground.

Like the other forces that made what was shortly to become the 60s – rock music, the Vietnam war, the civil rights struggles, the political assassinations, the moon walk – pop art was a great leveler, scrambler, and disregarder of boundaries. And at the end of this uprising...stood the unlikeliest of standard bearers, an artist who seemed determined to remain as blank as possible. (Bockris, 1989: 120-21)

To be sure, the first wave of American punk acts were, by and large, formed as a means of responding to the bloated nature of mainstream rock music and reflecting (if not celebrating) the experiences of a youth culture based around narcotic escape. The impetus of the first wave of punk, however, is popularly attributed to the ‘Pop Art’ movement of Andy Warhol and the formation of the Velvet Underground. In the early 1960s, the little-known Warhol had set about carving out a reputation in New York's artistic community, initiating the rise of so-called ‘pop art.’ Using the art of silk screening to create and quickly reproduce representations of prevalent pop cultural images such as Campbell’s Soup cans, Coca Cola products, and the image of then recently deceased American icon Marilyn Monroe, Warhol came to be perceived as an especially subversive commentator on the status of 1960s American consumer culture:

[Though other seminal artists] had written that reproduction was the only way anything could survive in a society that destroyed everything it laid eyes on... [Warhol's] use of it was seen as unusually subversive. After all, many artists painted the same subject over and over from different angles, but to paint and repaint the same subject as identically as possible stemmed to undermine art's essential value – the uniqueness of each work – and seemed designed, in fact, to render [art itself] meaningless (Bockris, 1989: 112)

Warhol appeared to comment on the superficiality of consumer culture, celebrity culture and, perhaps, art's subservience to each. As his status as a cutting-edge artistic voice solidified, Warhol would undertake new artistic ventures, including a string of films (including *Andy Warhol's Frankenstein* and *Andy Warhol's Dracula*) which appeared to challenge and corrode the significance of American(ized) cultural icons. Eventually, and at the suggestion of (Steven Patrick) Morrissey, Warhol began incorporating American Rock music into his cinematic presentations.

During this period, Warhol was introduced to a burgeoning music group, led by New York art scene fixture Lou Reed. Reed's act, the Velvet Underground, self-consciously served as the antithesis to both the technical virtuosity of progressive rock and the melody of mainstream pop. As the Velvet Underground began to develop a reputation for featuring lyrics celebrating drug abuse and constructing a highly rudimentary (and unkempt) musical style, Warhol would undertake the role of the band's manager and ensure that the Velvet Underground became a staple at Warhol's Factory studio:

[Warhol's] idea was to take the black-clad, scruffy young band with its rock-and-roll music about heroin and sadomachochism, put the icy blond white-on-white Nico up front, and have them play as loud as they could behind male and female go-go dancers while his films were projected in the background and strobe lights roamed the audience. He understood the need to express distress in the culture: why shouldn't rock and roll be disturbing? (Bockris, 1989: 182)

Albeit gradually, the Velvet Underground and their self-titled debut album began to curry favor with frustrated music aficionados along the American East Coast. Offering up material that virtually anyone with a passable familiarity with instrumentation could pattern their own playing after, and themes surrounding self-destruction and the general climate of social and political disassociation, the group appealed to other would-be aspiring musicians possessed of a similarly anomic worldview. The Velvet Underground, directly or otherwise, would inspire the formation of a plethora of historically notable punk and rock artists and acts throughout the remainder of the 1960s: Patti Smith in New York, the MC5 in Detroit and, perhaps the group who best married the 1960s underclass mindset to a style closer to traditional rock, Pennsylvania's The Stooges (modified to Iggy and the Stooges prior to the release of their seminal album *Raw Power*, produced by David Bowie in 1979). As these groups contributed to and reflected upon what *Punk Magazine* contributor (and subsequent director of such films as *I Shot Andy Warhol* and *American Psycho*) Mary Harron would describe as “[a sense of] nihilism in the atmosphere, a longing to die.... [a] longing for oblivion” (Savage, 1991, 133), it might be said that early American punk was a non-political musical form meant to reflect the standpoint of a youth culture that had come to celebrate self-destruction and narcotic self-medication as

opposed to the prospect of youth politicization. There are, of course, exceptions: the MC5, recognizing the early punk movement as a target for politicization, attempted to forge ties with the Black Panther Party, organized a concert meant to contribute to relations building and, hopefully, instigate a movement toward ‘revolution.’ In the wake of a poor turnout by the audience and scheduled bands alike, MC5 member Dennis Thompson recounts an instant dissatisfaction with the political capacities of the ostensibly emergent ‘alternative culture’:

“[The Chicago concert] was supposed to be the show of solidarity...[but] no one showed up but us. That’s what pissed me off. I knew the revolution was over at that moment- I looked over my shoulder, and no one else was there. We were the ones who were gonna get hanged. I said, ‘This is it. There ain’t no revolution. It doesn’t exist. It’s bullshit. The movement is dead’” (McNeil & McCain, 2006: 45). As Stooges vocalist Iggy Pop similarly notes, the ‘alternative culture’ itself regarded the pseudo-politicization of the MC5’s early material with an ambivalence bordering on hostility. “[MC5 manager] John Sinclair was always saying, ‘you’ve got to get with the people!’” I was like...’Oh man, what is this? Gimme a break! The people don’t give a fuck.’ Sinclair would say, ‘We are going to politicize the youth!’ But the kids were like, ‘WHAT? Just gimme some dope.’ They didn’t care. That’s how it really was. (McNeil & McCain, 2006: 47-8).

While these prototypical punk acts maneuvered within the field of restricted artistic production (in large part due to their rejection by record buying publics), artists of the era demonstrated few qualms about collusion with the mainstream recording industry. Though the Velvet Underground issued their debut album on the independent Jazz label Verve Records in 1966 (they, too, would migrate to the major MGM label for their self-titled third album in 1969), subsequent artists had little hesitation in aligning themselves with corporate record labels: Patti

Smith's celebrated debut album, *Horses*, was released on the Sony Music subsidiary Arista in 1967, and both the Stooges and the MC5 released their early catalogues on Elektra records. Though Savage (1991) describes "the twinning of revolutionary rhetoric with [mainstream] pop culture [as] a monolith" as "the bohemian, if not revolutionary attitudes of the Beatles and the Rolling Stones [toward the end of the 1960s]...were bankrolled by multi-national corporations" (1991: 35), the fact remains that neither the bohemian proto-punk community, nor subsequent acts ranging from The Ramones (Sire, subsequently acquired by Warner) to the Dictators (Epic Records) to the Dead Boys (Sire), appeared to harbor hesitation in either signing with major record labels or remaining with their imprints when subsumed by major labels. Indeed, Punk rock's preoccupation with abiding by the proscriptions for 'authentic' artistic distribution – in keeping with Bourdieu's characterization of the field of restricted production - would not appear to emerge until punk rock's migration to England.⁹

5. 3.2)1970s America: *The Ramones and Punk Magazine*.

Plundering the vaults of American popular culture, bands such as the Dictators and the Ramones created a playfully ironic pastiche of suburban adolescence. Here, the

⁹ While the proscriptions for authentic punk artistic practice cannot be dated back to the acts of the 1960s, there is some evidence to suggest that the term 'punk' itself may have made its' initial appearance during this era – according to Iggy Pop's recollection: "When the *Rolling Stone* review of the first Stooges album came out, I think it was written by Lenny Kaye, I think it also contained the first reference to the word 'punk.' I think it happened from that review. To paraphrase, 'This is the music of punks cruising for burgers.' And I was so furious because I was a macrobiotic!" (Liner notes, Iggy and the Stooges *Raw Power* reissue, 1997, Columbia Records). Attempts to validate Pop's claim suggest that this recollection may be incorrect. The sole *Rolling Stone* review of *The Stooges*, published in 1969 and attributed to Edmund O. Ward, does not contain reference to the term 'punk', instead characterizing the band as 'sub-literate' Rolling Stones impersonators (Ward, 1969). Regardless, Pop's attempt to affiliate his group with the term, albeit with nearly thirty years having passed and in hindsight, demonstrates the tendency of different camps of punk rock knowledge producers who claim to be affiliated with the initial use of the term.

stereotypes and iconography of ‘teenage life’ – one of the great mythologies to emerge from the clear-eyed confidence of American consumer culture – were both blissfully celebrated and mercilessly parodied. (Osgerby, 1999: 156)

If the cultural climate of 1960s America can be described as an era of youth disillusionment and political apathy, that of the 1970s signaled the emergence of a fissure between the political and cultural dimensions of American life. While the decade witnessed the emergence of popular mass movements to pull American troops out of the Vietnam War, the tragedy of the Kent State shootings in Ohio, public outrage stemming from the exposure of the Watergate scandal and Nixon’s subsequent resignation as President of the United States, the content of mainstream American culture industries seemed intent on representing a different characterization of American life. As acts like the Beach Boys and television programs such as *Happy Days* advance idealized depictions of teenage wholesomeness, the rampant popularity of *Star Wars* in 1976 denoted an acute desire for escapism and spectacle. It is somewhat ironic that much of the artistic output of the Ramones might so easily be perceived as further facilitating the cultural authority of the ‘care-free’ teenager. Early signature tunes including “Blitzkrieg Bop”, “Rockaway Beach” and “Sheena is a Punk Rocker” reflected the pop and surf sensibilities of mainstream youth cultural forms at the time, the band did not shy away from darker themes. While songs like “Beat On The Brat” and “Now I Wanna Sniff Some Glue” pointed toward the potential dangers (self-inflicted or otherwise) of underclass life in New York City, Dee Dee Ramone’s “53rd & 3rd”, which reflected upon the bassist’s tenure as a male prostitute, spoke of a more immediate danger stemming from youth poverty and substance abuse (Ramone & Kofman, 2000).

In terms of both content and style, the Ramones represent a turning point in the trajectory punk rock would ultimately take; both throughout the United States and beyond. Though acts like The Stooges and the Velvet Underground embodied self-destructive tendencies and socio-political ambivalence through their performances, their lyrics reflected a notable degree of poeticism. The Ramones, on the other hand, succeeded in painting a portrait of impoverished urban life – not to mention boredom – that could be easily grasped by the so-called ‘lowest common denominator’. If the first wave of American punk rock catered to the bohemian sensibilities of New York’s art culture, the Ramones infused their music with ‘low culture’ sensibilities in a manner celebrated throughout punk rock to this day.

The Ramones can likely be held responsible for the process whereby American punk rock, once highly inspired by "bohemia and radical art", began to reflect the distinct influence of "less cerebral cultural forms [...] specifically, the suburban pop tradition that runs from 60s surf, through garage and fuzz rock, to the bubble gum ebullience of the early 70s" (Osgerby, 1999:165). Dee Dee Ramone’s reflections surrounding the genesis of the band, the genealogical link between 1960s American punk and that of the 1970s boils down to aesthetics and, by extension, the emergence of the New York Dolls. Though the New York Dolls had more in common with pub rock than the proto-punk acts, the group became highly influential on the basis of their choice in stage aesthetics. Inspired, in part, by David Bowie's Ziggy Stardust alter-ego (and, under Bowie's tutelage, the Stooges), the Dolls made a name for themselves by way of incorporating drag into their performances. As actress and witness to the 1970s American punk movement, Cyndi Lauper recalls:

“[Dolls vocalist] David Johanssen borrowed the outrageousness of the ridiculous theatre and put it into Rock & Roll... He was certainly the one that did it, because he wanted to be hip, and I think he very much wanted to be part of the theatre scene. The ridiculous theatre was much more exciting than Rock & Roll. It was more alive – it wasn’t all cut up, patched up, cleaned up, and sold to the mass media the way rock & roll had been. (McNeil & McCain, 2006: 116)

While it seems counterintuitive to describe the first rock outfit to engage in cross-dressing as the antithesis to image-conscious mainstream rock, the Dolls nevertheless succeeded in swiftly establishing a reputation for spectacle due, in equal measures, to their fashion and propensity - especially on the part of guitarist Johnny Thunders – to perform under the sway of heroin addiction. Though it would be tempting to attribute the Dolls’ attire to some higher-level semiotic significance, the testimony of the band’s bassist, Jerry Nolan, seems to indicate the dual objectives were rendering themselves gossip-worthy and attracting the attention of women (McNeil & McCallum, 2006).

The Ramones fashioned themselves after the New York Dolls, adopting a shared uniform of black leather jackets and torn blue jeans; a wardrobe which simultaneously referenced Brando’s role in *The Wild One* and the sensationalized ‘dangerous’ youth subcultures alleged to be terrorizing English beach resorts around this same era (Cohen, 2002). This shared style was a tactical move on the part of the band: having witnessed the (albeit modest) following which the Dolls commanded, the Ramones adopted a similar gimmick to infiltrate the American rock mainstream (Ramone & Kofman, 2000; Gramaglia, 2005). As the Ramones, quite explicitly, sought mainstream success (through recording with legendary producer and gun aficionado Phil

Specter for their *End Of The Century* album or appearing in their own B-movie film, *Rock N' Roll High School*), they may have been less concerned with lampooning the Beach Boys than following in their footsteps toward mainstream commercial success.

While the Ramones never achieved the commercial profile they sought, they are almost uniformly accredited the distinction of instigating the emergence of, and indelibly shaping, punk rock in both mid-1970s New York and London. Their stage time at Hilly Kristal's soon-to-be iconic New York club, CBGBs, subjected unsuspecting audiences to a rapid-fire barrage of incredibly fast, short, and simplistic songs. Integrating melody and distinct pop sensibilities through songs considered far too fast and morally questionable for public consumption, the Ramones built an eclectic fan-base of devotees: holdovers from the New York art scene who interpreted their pastiche of styles and B-movie themes as an extension of Pop Art, bewildered audiences drawn out to take in a bona-fide musical oddity, and underclass youth who finally found their own day-to-day experiences reflected in the band's penchant for songs celebrating boredom, inhalant abuse, and scenes from films such as *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*. The gradual process through which the Ramones began achieving notoriety and success impacted the formation of a revitalized New York punk rock scene: just as Kristal became increasingly open to featuring novel 'street rock' acts at CBGBs, the Ramones inspired the formation of a number of bands – including Blondie, Television, the Dead Boys and the Voivods – who filled those emerging stage slots. However, even as the Ramones began touring the American East throughout 1975, and CBGBs established itself as the site of a novel new form of rock music, the emergent artistic form had not yet been formerly christened. As Savage (1991) notes, "Nobody could agree on the name for the new movement: Hilly Kristal called it Street Rock, but a new

magazine published that winter finally codified it” (1991: 130). That magazine was, of course, entitled *Punk*.

5. 3.3) Bourdieusian Notes on the Fanzine Press

Bourdieu allocates the artistic press a significant role in the process of consecrating the legitimacy of artistic forms on the basis of how well they conform to the expectations of artistic authenticity which these knowledge producers, themselves, construct and codify through the medium of the press. Sarah Thornton (1995) also attributes considerable significance to the media (and, specifically, the ‘Do It Yourself’ or grassroots press) within a subcultural context, noting how the music press:

...categorize social groups, arrange sounds, itemize attire and label everything. They baptize scenes and generate the self-consciousness required to maintain cultural distinctions. They give definition to vague cultural formations, pull together and reify the disparate materials which become subcultural homologies. The music and style press are crucial to our conceptions of [youth]; they do not just cover subcultures, they *help to construct them*. (1995: 151, my italics)

Further,

Subcultures are constructed in the process of being discovered. Journalists and photographers do not invent subcultures, but *shape them, mark their core and reify their*

borders...[thus proving] integral to the process by which we create groups through their representation (1995: 151, my italics).

Bourdieu and Thornton's analyses apply to *Punk Magazine*. First published in late 1975, *Punk* was born of the efforts of cartoonist John Holmstrom, Jed Dunn and 'resident punk' Legs McNeil. Though there is some continuing (and, arguably, redundant) debate surrounding the context in which the term "punk" was first affixed to this burgeoning Rock musical form,¹⁰ McNeil (2006) recalls the process of christening the fanzine as follows:

Holmstrom wanted the magazine to be a combination of everything we were into – television reruns, drinking beer, getting laid, cheeseburgers, comics, grade-B movies, and this weird rock & roll that nobody but us seemed to like: The Velvets, the Stooges, the New York Dolls, and now the Dictators. So John said he wanted to call our magazine Teenage News, after an unreleased New York Dolls song. I thought it was a stupid title, so I told him that. And he said, 'well, what do you think we should call it? I saw the magazine Holmstrom wanted to start as a Dictators album come to life... I thought the magazine should be for other fuck-ups like us [...] So I said, "why don't we call it *Punk*?' The word punk seemed to sum up the thread that connected everything we liked – drunk, obnoxious, smart but not pretentious, absurd, funny, ironic, and things that appealed to the darker side. (McNeil & McCain, 2006: 203-04)

¹⁰ Though popular legend has it that the term 'punk' was coined by iconic rock journalist Lester Bangs within the pages of *Creem Magazine*, this account has proven particularly difficult to verify. What is verifiable, however, is that the Ramones had recorded a demo cassette featuring the song 'Judy Is A Punk' in the autumn of 1975, thereby indicating that the term had been affiliated with the emergent form at least a few months prior to the point where McNeil claims to have, himself, coined it.

Following the decision on a name for the prospective fanzine, McNeil recalls strategic grassroots advertizing throughout the New York region: “The next thing we did was go out and plaster the city with these little posters that said, WATCH OUT! PUNK IS COMING! Everyone who saw them said, ‘punk? What’s punk?’ John and I were laughing. We were like, “ohhh, you’ll find out’.” (McNeil & McCain, 2006: 207). Whether the impetus for this advertizing ploy was to promote the upcoming fanzine or to ensure the publisher’s authoritative affiliation with the term, it is interesting to note that the majority of the early commentaries in *Punk*, instigated by responses to readers’ mail, fueled a debate surrounding proper use of the term. In response to one (particularly homophobic) letter published in the third issue of the magazine (April 1976),¹¹ Holmstrom replies to the controversy surrounding use of the term. Beyond indicating that ‘punk’ stood as a controversial generic signifier Holmstrom attempts to codify and entrench his understanding of the term while disaffiliating himself with it at the same time:

This is a good letter. It deserves an answer, ‘cause it brings up a lot of moot points – like what a punk is and what this magazine is all about...First, it’s about the word ‘punk’. Any idiot knows that words (like magazines, rock albums, and people) tend to assume several identities. Your own definition is valid but reveals more about yourself than ‘punk’[...] the key word – to me, anyway – in the punk definition was ‘ a beginner, an inexperienced hand’. Punk rock – any kid can pick up a guitar and become a rock n’ roll star, despite or

¹¹ It is important to mention here that the entirety of *Punk Magazines* publications can be found archived on the Punk Magazine website as of the date of this writing (November 28th, 2012) at <http://www.punkmagazine.com/vault/vault-main.html>

because of his (sic) lack of ability, talent, intelligence [...] Rock n' roll is a very primitive form of expression – like cave paintings or jungle sculpture. It takes a lot of sophistication – or, better, none at all – to appreciate punk rock at its best or worst (not much difference). (Holmstrom, 1976: 'Editorial' Punk Magazine Issue 3 [online]).

While Holmstrom appears, at this point, to speak to the subjectivity of the term punk by stating that '[anyone's] definition is valid but reveals more about [oneself] than 'punk','' he goes on to lambast music critics who have deployed it as a 'catchword' to describe bands that are, by his estimation, 'not punk rock':

Punk has become a catchword for a lot of critics to describe N.Y. underground rock, most of which is not punk rock...Legs named this magazine. I used punk at his suggestion as I felt the word was so overused that it was now meaningless. I still feel the same way. (Holmstrom, 1976: 'Editorial' Punk Magazine Issue 3 [online]).

This contradictory chain of logic allows Holmstrom to reject an objective definition of punk while affirming his own (self-asserted) authoritative ability to differentiate between 'real' punk rock and its illegitimate use in the mainstream music press. Holmstrom further justifies his authority by claiming a requisite 'sophistication' (or lack thereof) that can 'appreciate punk rock at its best or worst.' In going so far as to compare proper punk rock sensibilities with those able to appreciate the significance of 'cave paintings' or 'jungle sculpture', Holmstrom claims a seemingly innate ability to identify punk rock legitimacy. Finally, having championed his own authenticity-gauging sensibilities, Holmstrom ends his editorial by claiming that the magazine

was christened with a term that he declares ‘overused’ and ‘meaningless’ at the behest of the magazine’s co-creator. Holmstrom’s lack of hesitation in identifying McNeil as a scapegoat establishes his personal distinction as a legitimate knowledge producer.

The early pages of *Punk* capture the beginning of a process, soon to be continued overseas, whereby attempts to legitimize or discredit varying forms of knowledge concerning punk rock were undertaken by self-professed authoritative voices, with many following Holmstrom’s lead in claiming some inherent ability to deduce between ‘real punk’ and its imposters. Though it is interesting to speculate that the punk rock fanzine press underwent a process of self-actualization as a source of punk rock expertise *before* punk rock artists themselves began to affiliate themselves with the term, it is interesting to note that early editions of *Punk* contribute very little coverage to what would soon become a significant target of debate: namely, the correlation between punk and fashion. Just as the narrative stemming from 1960s American proto-punk purported to comment on adolescent ambivalence and the meaninglessness of art, only to be challenged by a 1970s narrative which framed punk as a celebration of lower forms of adolescent pop culture, the emergence of something akin to an ‘aesthetic turn’ within the field of punk artistic production would instigate the popularism of a third genesis narrative linking punk with the artistic philosophies of Dada and the Situationist movement.

5. 3.4) Artistic Influences: Situationism, Malcolm McLaren, and the New York Dolls

While punk was a relatively new phenomenon, academics and cultural commentators reflecting back upon its ostensible ‘death’ toward the end of the 1970s claimed punk to be an extension (if not a reprisal) of the artistic ‘moments’ of past generations. Greil Marcus’s *Lipstick*

Traces (1989), which still stands as one of the most renowned theoretical works to consider the punk movement, argues that punk can be approached as a resurgence (or re-emergence) of the artistic philosophies which propelled Dada and Situationist philosophy throughout the early to mid 20th century. Pinpointing the emergence of Dada with the observations of artists and filmmakers such as Hugo Ball and Richard Hulsenback, Marcus describes Dada as having emerged in the wake of the fear that “art had failed humanity...into thinking the world was better than it was...because art diverted the human desire to remake the world into the lunatic’s therapy of making poems, paintings, [and] ashtrays” (Marcus, 1989: 209). In other words, art promoted a process whereby the socially dejected might focus their creative energies to the production of artistic works as opposed to sparking any initiative toward striving for concrete social change. In their assessment, the concept of art and the ‘history’ of artistic practice alike had been shaped to reflect and reinforce the dominance of the privileged class. Like Althusser, who approached mass entertainment as an ideological bourgeois agent, Dada suggests that mainstream definitions of art (and art history) offer a politically benign outlet for refusal while rendering the logic of capitalism unfettered. Buoyed by the grim prospect that “paint and canvas were [tools] as obsolete as alchemy...in the face of new machines that were transforming [and destroying] the world” (Marcus, 1989: 211), Dada took the symbols and signs which shaped ‘commonsense’ social reality (and which contributed toward a collective docility among its inhabitants) as its raw materials. Reconfiguring common signs (including snatches of text and imagery) in ways meant to evoke confusion and discomfort, Dada artists advanced representations of semiotic chaos to reference a social chaos which they longed to see spread throughout ‘civilized’ society.

The principles of Dada influenced the emergence of the Situationist International (SI); a wide-reaching community of artists including the Marxian social critic and filmmaker Guy

Debord. Though sharing in Dada's criticism of the political inefficacy of art and the dominance of bourgeois artistic culture, the Situationists strove less to convey semiotic chaos than to dissolve the boundaries between art and lived experience. Arguing that "art [was best] to be experienced as 'possibilities'," the SI longed that "[Daydreams] would find themselves empowered, turning into catalysts for new passions, new acts, [and] new agents: situations made to be lived by their creators', a whole new way of being in the world" (Marcus, 1989: 164-65). In so many words, the SI promoted artistic expressions and practices that might challenge the 'commonsensicality' of entrenched human conventions, and – by breaching lived reality – awaken recipients to newfound and endless possibilities for personal and collective conduct. This aim could be realized, in part, through the practice of 'détournement': a concept which, in calling for the "theft of aesthetic artifacts from their contexts and their diversion into contexts of one's own desire" (Marcus, 1989: 168), could be correlated with Barthes' understanding of the semiotic process, the creation of 'myth', and the potential to repurpose the signs through revised connotation. Convinced that populations the world over experienced "an unfathomed dissatisfaction" with modern life, yet bolstered by the notion that new 'possibilities' "could be explored, explained, publicized and glamorized until demand would be overwhelming" (1989, 175), members of the SI believed that "the détournement of the right sign in the right place and at the right time could spark a mass reversal of perspective" (1989: 179) among the broader public.

While Marcus' work has considerable traction with artistic critics and cultural scholars, his insights have drawn significant criticism from some of the punk rock artistic producers who factored in to his analysis – chief among them John Lydon; in spite of (or perhaps because) his image graces the cover of Marcus' publication. Although Lydon vehemently denies that the

Situationist philosophy had any bearing on the emergence of the Sex Pistols, the band's manager, publicist, and architect, the late Malcolm McLaren (assisted in no small part by his boutique partner, fashion designer Vivienne Westwood), attests to having drawn inspiration from Situationist philosophy, as evident in Westwood's 'punk fashion' and the stunts, highlighted throughout the remainder of this chapter, which McLaren engineered throughout the tenure of the Sex Pistols. I provide an overview of Situationist philosophy here to demonstrate that, while Situationist influences can be detected in the dress and practices of many significant punk rock groups, this cannot be assumed to suggest that those punk rock artists themselves endorsed, or even understood, these influences - meaning that its' implicit influence on the development of punk culture is comparable to that of the ideological camps I identify here.

Consider the manner in which Malcolm McLaren, who took a managerial position with the New York Dolls in the early 1970s, incorporated Situationist aims into the group's image – much to the ire of the New York punk community and the New York Dolls themselves. While the American proto-punk bands of the 1960s worked toward sowing the seeds for a new form of rock music, McLaren and Westwood set about establishing a clothing shop on London's King's Row which would take on the name Sex by the mid-1970s. McLaren, an art school drop-out, strove to build a customer base from the various youth subcultural groups germinating throughout England during the period (most prominently groups like the Teddy Boys and the Rockers). Meanwhile, Westwood experimented with creating new, scandalous fashions based, in large part, on bondage and S&M wear. By the stage at which McLaren interjected himself into the burgeoning New York punk rock scene, the pair had apparently grown weary of perpetually rebranding their boutique in a continuing effort to stay on top of the ever-changing landscape of cutting-edge subcultural youth fashion. Following a chance encounter which found

members of the New York Dolls visiting the boutique and, soon thereafter, a vacancy in the band's managerial position, McLaren relocated to New York with intentions of taking the position himself. Albeit interested in breaking in to the American music industry, McLaren's interest in the New York Dolls stemmed from a wish to pair his interpretation of the Dolls with his own (decidedly Situationist) interest in aesthetics:

The New York Dolls were fun because they were a fucking bunch of vain bastards, and being such vain bastards, I suppose they clung to that notion of narcissism which was so apparent in the sixties generation – of never ever wanting to grow up. And that very notion of never wanting to grow old – the Dolls emulated that in the form of their transsexual clothing, and their general notion of remaining a doll, a little doll. So I tried to throw politics into the mill. There was a whole notion of the ‘politics of boredom’, and this whole idea of dressing the Dolls up in red vinyl and throwing them Mao’s Red Book – I just loved fucking with that kind of pop-trash culture of Warhol, which was so goddamned Catholic, and so boring, and so pretentiously American, where everything had to be a product, everything had to be disposable. I thought, ‘fuck it. I’m gonna try and make the Dolls totally the opposite. I’m not going to make them disposable. I’m going to give them a serious political point of view’. (McNeil & McCain, 2006: 190)

Though the McCarthy era of politicized fear mongering had passed, America remained entrenched in the Cold War and still harbored anxiety about the global threat of communism. McLaren’s objective would render the Dolls an ostensible political threat as well as a cultural spectacle. McLaren’s intentions were not, however, looked upon kindly throughout the wider

New York punk rock community. As Bob Gruen, photographer and longstanding New York Doll's documentarian notes:

Malcolm made these sets of clothes for everybody in the New York Dolls...but everything was in bright red – the whole band was in red. So Malcolm wanted to have a red party, and he made this big communist flag to put behind the band. And it wasn't really a communist party, it was a red party. But the significance of that was kinda lost on people, because Americans got really excited when you talked about communists. Malcolm and the band didn't really hit it off in that sense, because Malcolm really wanted to get political, and get people excited on a political level. (McNeil & McCain, 2006: 190)

The ire which McLaren attracted throughout the CBGBs scene was not simply due to his focus on aesthetics. However, as Gail Higgins, a close personal acquaintance to the Dolls (and subsequent manager of the Heartbreakers) notes, much of the frustration surrounding McLaren's influence on the New York Dolls stemmed from his attempt to integrate a political dimension into punk rock: "We HATED Malcolm. He was putting the Dolls in those red commie-inspired suits and doing the whole political thing, and the dolls had nothing to do with politics. None of them knew anything about politics. We just thought it was ridiculous" (McNeil & McCain, 2006: 191). New York Dolls bassist Jerry Nolan recalls the band's tenure with McLaren as "too artsy-fartsy. He had us dressing up in matching red leather suits and playing in front of a giant communist flag. It was so stupid!" (2006: 191) Of course, and in spite of the band's lack of interest in (and lack of familiarity with) the 'political statement' which McLaren was attempting

to advance, the Dolls nevertheless conformed to his wishes; a move which many suspect served as the catalyst for the group's demise.

This brief case study is significant for two reasons. First, the aesthetic influence which McLaren harbored over the Dolls points to the difficulty of approaching punk fashion as a sincere expression of a collective ideology. Many of the fashions which certain significant acts (including the New York Dolls, the Sex Pistols and the Clash) came to endorse were less a product of their own artistic agency than an attempt to cater to the demands of their managerial staff. Artists working under McLaren (not to mention his self-professed nemesis, Bernie Rhodes, who is credited with assembling the Clash) neither designed their own aesthetics nor, as with the Dolls, even understood their semiotic relevance, the tendency among academics to view and comment upon the significance of punk from a purely aesthetic perspective is problematic.¹²

5.3.5) Political Disaffiliation and the Punk 'Anti-Movement'

In sum, American punk rock appeared to harbor, and celebrate, a distinct lack of interest in politics. As McNeil recalls:

Punk was like, this is new, this is now, the apotheosis, powerful. But it wasn't political...the great thing about punk was that it had no political agenda. It was about real freedom, personal freedom. It was also about doing anything that's gonna offend a grown-up. Just being as offensive as possible. Which seemed delightful, just euphoric. Be the real people we are. You know? I just loved it. (McNeil & McCain, 2006: 299)

¹² With the notable exception of Laing (1982), early punk rock was almost uniformly analyzed from a semiotic perspective which – quite rightly – noted a heavy Situationist influence. In limiting their analysis to aesthetics, however, it is arguable that these researchers deduced the intentions of those who dressed punk's early flagship groups without subjecting the content of their songs and lyrical themes to an equal amount of academic scrutiny.

While *Punk* magazine aspired to frame punk rock as a musical form meant to inspire and celebrate 'personal freedom', it would also take a decidedly critical stance regarding whether the punk rock movement should affiliate with broader social movements occurring in American society during the same time period. As *Punk* magazine (and punk rock in general) came to be accused of harboring homophobic attitudes due to its critique of the organized Queer Liberation Movement, McNeil suggests that the 'freedom' stemming from an involvement in punk would be threatened by aligning with any given political agenda. However, as the following excerpt suggests, this distaste for political activism may have stemmed from fears surrounding how status within the scene was accredited.

Gay liberation had really exploded...suddenly in New York, it was cool to be gay...so we said, 'No, being gay doesn't make you cool. Being cool makes you cool, whether you're gay or straight.' ...Mass movements are always so un-hip. That's what was great about punk. It was an anti-movement, because there was knowledge there from the very beginning that with mass appeal comes all these tedious folks who need to be told what to think. Hip can never be a mass movement. And culturally, the gay liberation movement and all the rest of the movements were the beginning of political correctness, which was just fascism to us. Real fascism. More rules... (McNeil & McCain, 2006: 275).

In other words, whereas a politically unaffiliated punk rock subcultural sphere determined 'cool' by one's affinity for bands such as the Ramones and the Dictators, alignment with the gay rights movement was seen to risk rendering one's sexual orientation as a primary

form of status and legitimate participation. McNeil's disavowal of 'all the rest of the movements' including civil and women's rights movements ensures, in part, that the aristocracy of punk rock artists and knowledge producers would remain composed primarily of heterosexual white males. However, McNeil justifies punks' exclusionist tendencies on the basis of 'anti-movement' as the 'true purpose' of punk rock – even if that purpose simply revolved around 'being as offensive as possible.' Formal political aspirations would threaten the sanctity of the field and place conformist limitations on membership.

While 1970s American punk rock appears to have refused any formative input from Queer culture, the same cannot be said for the initial wave of punk rock acts based in Toronto during the late 1970s. It is an unfortunate reality that Canadian punk rock acts – with the exception of bands like Vancouver's DOA and Edmonton's SNFU – so rarely factor into the grand narratives surrounding the impetus of North American punk rock; a fact that Sutherland (2012) correlates with Canadian geography and the isolation of many urban Canadian music scenes. Nevertheless, Sutherland's research into the initial waves of Canadian punk rock identifies the Dishes, a Toronto area punk act which began performing in 1976, with "[possessing] a distinct gay energy...at a time when gay culture was still a fringe community, [and creating] an open-minded punk scene simply by virtue of them being there first." As Sutherland notes, "...the Dishes, far from the norm in culturally conservative Toronto, built the foundation for the punk scene of Toronto, establishing its rules and social mores. That meant a community that was devoid of the homophobia that pervaded almost every other music scene at that time...the importance of this connection cannot be overstated". (Sutherland, 2012: 101). Keeping in mind that Toronto and New York are neither worlds apart in terms of geography or culture, it is interesting to note how the former embraced and promoted queer influences while

the latter approached queer identity as (at best) a non-entity and (at worst) a fascist threat. Is it possible that the Toronto punk culture's comparative isolation from the burgeoning New York scene, combined with the lack of a renowned fanzine through which punk tastes and values were codified and accredited, can be held to account for this contrast? Can this be attributed, as Sutherland hints, to the fact that queer influences were accepted and celebrated on the sheer basis that acts like the Dishes were simply 'there first'? In any event, different core understandings of 'punk' led to the development of geographically unique fields of punk rock artistry and subcultural participation. Sutherland documents how regional isolation led to the development of unique and self-contained punk rock 'scenes' within each of Canada's major cities; many of which thrive and retain their local 'flavor' to this day.

Ironically, the greatest threat to the New York punk rock community's status as the consecrators of punk rock legitimacy would stem neither from the American civil rights movement or the insurrection of 'tedious' mainstream music aficionados. Instead, it would surface by virtue of punk rock's importation to England, the manifestation of new, distinctly politicized punk rock acts, and the concurrent development of competing punk fanzines and aesthetic trends. As McNeil recalls,¹³ and history has proven, English punk rock would eventually usurp the New York scene's reins over the authoritative ability to dictate what constituted 'punk'.

¹³ To quote McNeil directly: "I was in Los Angeles...when the Sex Pistols landed in Atlanta. It was very bizarre, because as the Pistols made their way across America, and the hysteria was broadcast on the news every night...[kids] were suddenly transforming themselves with safety pins, spiked haircuts, and ugliness. I was like, 'Hey, wait a minute! This isn't punk – a spiked haircut and a safety pin? What is this shit?' I mean, after all, we were Punk magazine. We had come up with the name and had defined punk as this underground American rock & roll culture...so it was like. 'Hey, if you want to go start your own youth movement, fine, but this one's already taken.' But the answer that came back was, 'Oh, you wouldn't understand. Punk started in England. You know, everyone is on the dole there, they really have something to complain about. Punk is really about class warfare and economic blah, blah, blah.' So I'd say, 'Yeah, well, what the fuck was Malcolm McLaren doing hanging out, managing the New York Dolls, and watching Richard Hell at CBGB's?' But you couldn't compete with those images of safety pins and spiked hair". (2006: 328-29)

5.4) Year Zero U.K: The Rise and Fall of First-Wave British Punk

If the popular narratives surrounding the emergence of the 1970s American punk movement primarily correlate with adolescent disillusionment, political ambivalence, and the incentive to shock and offend, those surrounding English punk rock commonly frame it as a bi-product of systemic issues contributing to rampant youth poverty throughout the 1960s and early 1970s. As Savage (1991) notes, by 1975, England had entered a period of socio-political turmoil as its people entered into a “recession...[that] didn’t seem like a temporary crisis but the acutest angle of a long, slow decline” (1991: 108). Beyond ensuring that England’s unemployment rate would prove to be at its’ highest since the Second World War, this post-war recession threatened the very social fabric of the country:

The whole idea of ‘consensus’ that had dominated postwar politics and social life was disintegrating: it was as though the whole postwar ideal of mass consumer enfranchisement fostered by Prime Ministers of both parties was being proved a sham...just as the pop culture of its mid-decade had fragmented into small segments, so the country’s social life seemed to be degenerating into warring factions. (Savage, 1991: 109).

This ‘degeneration’ manifested in popular discourses about the need to usher in meritocratic policies and a renewed celebration of individual responsibility. These themes infiltrated the political sphere in Margaret Thatcher’s election as the leader of the Conservative

Party, then the official opposition, in 1976. Underemployed and undereducated youth, however, primarily reacted to this social milieu through the formation of subcultural groups which, as discussed in chapter two, strove to protest the dissolution of working class culture through the adoption of nonconformist styles. Whereas America's first wave of punk aficionados claimed a musical movement, those involved with the development of British punk rock instead saw a potential class-based adolescent social movement.

It is, perhaps, no coincidence then that the majority of those conventions and value-judgments about artistic and participant authenticity began to take shape during the year following the initial emergence of British punk. Competing conventions stem from the interaction and influence of various populations of punk rock knowledge producers, including the early punk rock artists, their managers, the underground punk fanzine press and factions within the mainstream media. The following section will demonstrate how each popularized different understandings of what 'punk' entailed and what ends the art form (and the 'movement') were designed to achieve. The following longitudinal account considers patterns of interaction among what I take to be the most significant knowledge producers operating within English punk rock beginning in mid-1977, noting how each strove for the authoritative ability to 'speak' on behalf of punk and, in so doing, facilitated the early emergence of conflicting traditions in punk rock ideology.

5.4.1) November 1975: The debut of the Sex Pistols

The mixture of elitism and access, of aesthetics and social realism, that had made punk so powerful was on the point of fracture under the impact of money, fame, and attention. No

group embodied these contradictions more clearly than the Sex Pistols. They were supposed to be the real, unreconstructed voice of the working class, but they were as heavily packaged as silk. (Savage, 1991: 282)

Most historical accounts of the genesis of English punk rock begin with a consideration of the Sex Pistols and, more specifically, the continuing exploits of Malcolm McLaren. Having failed to manage the New York Dolls successfully, McLaren returned to London to concentrate on the *Sex* boutique. Despite the fact that many English youth were living on meagre social assistance (the 'dole') and squatting in derelict, abandoned buildings, those who frequented the boutique demonstrated a propensity to invest whatever resources they had in the procurement of the latest subcultural styles. As Savage observes, "in just over two years, McLaren and Westwood had learned through their trading and travelling how subcultures work, both culturally and commercially: how membership was not casual but involved a frantic, committed lifestyle that ignored orthodox convention at the same time as it observed strict rules of behavior" (2005: 64). Inspired by what he had observed in New York, McLaren returned to England equipped with a newfound inspiration with which to ensure the viability of his clothing shop while continuing his involvement with the music industry. Propelled, in part, by McLaren's experiences with the New York Dolls, the pair elected to manufacture their own subcultural group as a consumer base for Westwood's fashion creations.

Toward this end, McLaren elected to apply his 'managerial talents' by taking up duties with a burgeoning rock group then composed by guitarist Steve Jones (a squatter and semi-professional thief), bassist Glen Matlock and drummer Paul Cook. Though Jones initially aspired to assume vocals, a former business associate of McLaren's, Bernie Rhodes, suggested

that the band consider John Lydon on the basis of his sharp, caustic wit and curious fashion sense. Shortly thereafter, Lydon took on the pseudonym Johnny Rotten and the band itself the title of Sex Pistols; a name which McLaren insisted upon as a means of affiliating the band with his clothing outlet. “[the band] went out as Sex Pistols...I was in control and I wasn’t going to waste my time”, he recalls. “I was out to sell a lot of trousers” (Savage, 2006: 129).

While McLaren succeeded in forcing the group to christen themselves the Sex Pistols, any plans that he might have harbored in regards to the prospect of similarly controlling the band’s sound and lyrical content were lost with the addition of Lydon. A staunch critic of the English educational system, the monarchy, and the manner in which “working class people throughout the world...always try to spur their hatred onto what they see as being lower down the scale, rather than going for the fucking jugular of the upper and middle-class bastards who are keeping them down in the first place” (Lydon, 1993: 14), Lydon demanded that the band’s lyrics fall under his own jurisdiction. This point is significant and too often neglected by those who have attributed the Sex Pistol’s lyrics, sound, aesthetics and public persona to an overarching and unified artistic intention as opposed to the interaction of two antagonistic creative forces. This disjunction is, perhaps, best illustrated in considering Lydon’s (colorful) reaction to the prospect that punk was heavily influenced by Situationist philosophy, as Marcus argues:

We didn’t sit around and wax Situationist philosophy. Never. I always thought it was foolishness – art students just being art students. The Situationists had no situation – no rules, no regulations. That’s their apparent philosophy. But the trouble was that they thought about ‘organized’ chaos. They were too structured for my liking, word games and

no work... I don't know what the big pallabra was about the Situationsists, anyway. Its bollocks for that *Lipstick Traces* asshole to flog his book. Mind games for the muddled classes. (Lydon, 1993: 236)

Beyond demonstrating the presence of decided artistic differences between the group's architect and its' lyricist, this example deserves further consideration. Though the Sex Pistols' graphic artist, John Ingham, noted that McLaren's managerial strategy revolved around "trying to get his band into situations [...and] creating an audience specifically for the band" (Savage, 2005: 173), Lydon's artistic intentions were different. McLaren's 'situations' often revolved thematically around Lydon's lyrics, but Lydon challenged the expectation that "music was so bloody serious, all run by university graduates. It was all head music devoid of any real intellectualism...how on earth were we supposed to relate to that music when we lived in council flats? We had no money, no job, no nothing. So the Pistols projected that anger, that rock bottom working-class hate" (Lydon, 1995: 97). That 'expression of working-class hate', however, was not meant to function as an outlet for the frustration and anger born of economic marginalization. Instead, Lydon wanted the Sex Pistols to promote independent, critical thought and inspire listeners to "get off [their] ass and think for [themselves]." (Rotten, 1995: 322).

Catering to an audience consisting of *Sex Boutique* patrons and the fan base the Ramones had accumulated over the course of two tours of England, the Sex Pistols – all of whom, save Lydon, clothed themselves with boutique items in accordance with McLaren's wishes – swiftly gained local notoriety on the basis of their apparent lack of musical virtuosity, their caustic image, and Rotten's unique charisma as a performer and cultural critic. Featuring an early set consisting of Stooges covers and early renditions of many of the songs destined to contribute to

the band's eventual, lone full-length album release, the Sex Pistols were internally heralded as the early progenitors of a decidedly English brand of punk rock; one striving to depict the experiences of the English adolescent underclass through their aesthetics, lyrics, and collective stage personae.¹⁴ Through endorsing and, subsequently, popularizing socially reprehensible behavior as both an indicator of punk subcultural inclusivity (even if the group did not yet recognize itself as a bona fide 'subculture') and a marker of mainstream cultural exclusion, the Sex Pistols offered a live performance which would revile some and attract others. It was very shortly thereafter that a rash of groups emerged – including The Damned, Subway Sect, The Stranglers, The Buzzcocks, and The Clash – each of which, similarly, seemed to revel in public displays of revolt and a celebration of modest musical talent. Significantly, and though these early English punk acts would appear to have approached the emergence of their musical community with what Grey (1995) describes as a 'Year Zero' mentality (heralding themselves as the progenitors of punk, New York be damned), they nevertheless endorsed the term 'punk rock' as their own.

5.4.2) July 1976: *Debut of the Clash*

¹⁴ As Laing (1985) contends, the Sex Pistols instigated rites of performance as 'goadings' the audience, 'gobbing', and oscillating between expressions of seeming indifference and uncontained fury over the course of a single performance. Laing notes that these tropes contributed to a process whereby punk rock aficionados could "[express] affection and appreciation" (1985: 84) for an act while allowing that the social chaos which the Sex Pistols and other groups (ostensibly) aspired to instigate could be indulged in, if only temporarily, within the context of the live performance. Defying implied expectations of propriety and explicit laws prohibiting public spitting at one and the same time, Laing approaches the practice of gobbing as a rite of inclusion, and an act of social defiance, and a celebration shared in an underclass culture. "The mouth spits, but it also speaks and kisses," notes Laing, "Punk's inversion of gobbing, making it a gesture of recognition of a common bond between band and audience, played on this organ's important place in communication and in intimate expression" while "[remaining] inherently ambivalent, mixing resentment with affection" (1985: 85).

The genesis of the Clash is attributed to the managerial aspirations of one Bernie Rhodes; a Situationist advocate and former business associate of McLaren who, according to Joe Strummer, was driven to compose a group by virtue of one overarching impulse: “Malcolm had the Sex Pistols so Bernie was going to find a band of his own and prove Malcolm wrong in a way” (Strummer, Jones, Simonon & Headon, 2008: 90). As with McLaren and the Sex Pistols, Rhodes affiliated himself with a group-in-information; in this case, one including guitarist Mick Jones and bassist Paul Simonon, each of whom shared the experience of growing up amidst broken homes in London’s working underclass neighborhoods. With the addition of Strummer, Rhodes brought together a group of musicians who bore the stigma of depending on meagre social assistance, yet had attended (and dropped out of) post-secondary art colleges. Like Lydon, Strummer (2008) testifies to the impact that his experiences with the education system had on the character of the group’s artistic output:

Because of my upbringing, I felt that authority was a thing to be well avoided if possible. If you could get in and attack it and get away without being burnt, I would say yeah, do it. Questioning authority was high on the list of priorities. I could see from an early age that authority was a system of control which didn’t have any inherent wisdom...It was just something to get around. (Strummer, Jones, et al., 2008: 24)

Based in equal measure upon the traditions of socially conscious reggae music (citing current events in lyrics meant to raise critical, public consciousness) and Rhodes’ insistence that the band, as Jones recalls, “write about what we knew...the housing thing, lack of education, dead-end futures or just working your life away” (Ibid., 2008: 91), the Clash opted to craft songs, and

an image, meant to educate their listeners while motivating them to think critically. As Savage (2005) notes, even their early choices in dress, which included clothing which bore slogans such as 'Hate And War' and 'White Riot' stenciled in spray paint, "mirrored the group's ideology: not only could the clothes, in theory, be made by anybody, but they could be used to broadcast codes and slogans within the cultural resistance that was punk. They dramatized the polarization that was the wish-fulfillment of their name, yet couched it in fashion." (2005: 235).¹⁵ Though Strummer, long after the group's demise, declared that the Clash was "trying to move [society], in a socialist way, towards some future where the world might be less of a miserable place" (*Westway to the World* documentary, 2001), Savage observes (2005) that, even "[during] The Clash's first ever interview...they talk about first consuming society in order to change it." (Savage, 2005: 235). As excerpts from Steve Walsh's interview in the fourth issue of Mark Perry's *Sniffin' Glue* fanzine suggest, the group promoted social activism while disassociating from outright violence and anarchism:

SW- What's the name about? Why call yourselves Clash?

Paul – well, it's a clash against things that are going on...the music scene, and all that we're hoping to change quite a lot.

SW- Does this mean you're political?

Mick – Yes, we're definitely political! [...] we're really into encouraging creativity...we ain't a bunch of raving fascists!

SW – Are you a bunch of raving anarchists?

¹⁵ Although the creative leaders of the band attended art school for a time, the Situationist influence on the Clash's image may have been unknown to the band members themselves. As Strummer recalls, "[Rhodes] probably suggested that we write words on our clothing: I never knew much about the Situationist stuff, still don't today, but that's where it came from" (Savage, 2005: 235).

Joe – I don't believe in all that anarchy bollocks!

Mick – Yeah, anarchists believe in lawlessness...look, the important thing is to encourage people to do things for themselves, think for themselves and stand up for what their rights are.

SW – You hate apathy?

Mick – Oh, I fuckin' hate apathy but I hate ignorance more than anything.

SW – How much change do you want, d'you want a revolution?

Joe – well...yeah!

SW – A bloodless one, or do you just want total chaos?

Joe – No, I'm just not into chaos...I'd just like to make loads of people realize what's goin' on. Like, all those secrets in the government and all that money changing hands and every now and then it comes to light and someone gets sacked and someone else comes in the back-door, know what I mean? I'd like to get all that out in the open and just see what's goin' on. I just feel like no one's telling me anything, even if I read every paper, watch TV and listen to the radio! (Walsh, 1977 [2009]: (4) 3-6)

Through this interview, the Clash established themselves as the first English punk band to define themselves explicitly as a 'political' group (though not one composed of anarchists) who consciously crafted music meant to instigate a (bloodless) revolution by distributing information which the mainstream press refused to disseminate. Translating the overarching theme of the group's responses into Marxian English, the band appear to adopt the role of Gramscian 'underclass intellectuals' in providing audiences with information meant to alert them to their

shared interests and state of exploitation (with the end goal being praxis in the form of a bloodless revolution).

5.4.3) Women in Punk: X-Ray Spex, the Slits and the Egalitarian Intentions of the Early Movement

The best thing about [punk] for me was that I didn't have to rely on being a female guitarist as a gimmick. Punk was very liberating like that. For the first time I could do what I wanted to do, and being a girl wasn't an issue. It would've been uncool for that to be a problem. Punk allowed anyone in...but that was only true for about six months...

Chrissie Hynde, quoted in Leblanc (1999: 45).

Though the Sex Pistols and the Clash are the two groups most often touched upon in dominant origin narratives of English punk, those who have considered the impact of female artists, including Leblanc (2008 [1999]) and Raha (2005), suggest that the initial wave of punk artists intended to foster a community which invited and celebrated the involvement of female artists. As Raha (2005) notes, the early community of artists quickly embraced and supported British feminism, ensuring that acts composed of female musicians were granted opportunities to perform alongside their male counterparts. Throughout 1977, a number of prominent female punk rock artists – including Poly Styrene of X-Ray Spex, Siouxi Sioux of Siouxi and the Banshees, the Adverts and the Slits – contributed to an art form shaped by both sexes. These artists produced a wealth of material engaging the constrictive nature of socially prevalent notions of femininity and the self-empowerment to be derived by challenging the tropes of

normative gender performativity. Raha argues that “Women like Poly Styrene and Lora Logic [of X-Ray Spex] embraced the asexually bizarre [while] punks like Sioux and [the Slits’] Ari-Up flung their sensuality about eliciting simultaneous attraction and repulsion” (2005: 74). Leblanc agrees that “early punk offered female members a wide variety of stylistic options, allowing them to create their own mode of sexualized, desexualized, or anti-sexual self-presentation” (2008: 46).

Beyond challenging normative expressions of (and expectations surrounding) gender aesthetics, punk female performers critiqued sexual exploitation and repression, in the case of Siouxsie and the Banshees and the Slits; and consumption and social conceptions of beauty by the X-Ray Spex. X-Ray Spex “Oh Bondage, Up Yours!” – released in 1977 on the *Germ Free Adolescents* album - still serves as early punk rock’s definitive commentary on the restrictions and repressions inherent to a culture demanding that personal identity be reinforced through consumption habits:

Bind me tie me / Chain me to the wall / I wanna be a slave / To you all

Oh bondage up yours! / Oh bondage no more!

Chain-store chain-smoke / I consume you all / Chain-gang chain-mail / I don't think at all

Oh bondage up yours! Oh bondage no more!

(X-Ray Spex, "Oh Bondage, Up Yours!".

Germ Free Adolescents, 1978; EMI)

Here, Styrene and the X-Ray Spex suggest that cultural consumption limits identity choices for adolescent women, reducing consumer capacities to think up possibilities beyond those ‘identities on offer’. The Slits’ "Typical Girls", from the 1979 album *Cut*, also approach notions of ‘typical’ femininity from a critical perspective, questioning the roots of ‘normal’ gender expression:

Don't create / Don't rebel / Have intuition / Can't decide
Typical girls stand by their man / Typical girls are really swell
Typical girls learn how to act shocked / Typical girls don't rebel
Typical girls are looking for something / Typical girls fall under spells
Typical girls buy magazines / Typical girls feel like hell
Who invented the typical girl? / Who's bringing out the new improved model?
And there's another marketing ploy / Typical girl gets the typical boy

(The Slits, "Typical Girls".

Cut, 1978; Island)

Beyond suggesting that becoming a ‘typical girl’ demands self-censure (“typical girls don’t rebel’), promotes the practice of defining oneself through relationships with men, and pursues unattainable notions of beauty (through ‘buying magazines’, which leads one to ‘feel like hell’), it is interesting that the Slits close the song by suggesting that the ‘typical boy’ is, likewise, a product of similar processes of consumption and self-regulation. While this lends credence to John Lydon’s claim that “women were out there playing with the men, taking us on in equal

terms,” and that the early community of punk rock artists “didn’t have barriers between men and women, black and white, gay and straight” (Lydon, 1993: 378), it is nevertheless troubling that the role that women held in shaping politically-edged punk rock is so often glossed over, or outright disregarded, by the majority of accounts surrounding punk’s genesis. To some extent, I would suggest that this omission can be attributed to the unflattering manner in which female punk participation was framed within the pages of Mark Perry’s *Sniffin’ Glue* fanzine.

5.4.4) July 1976: Debut of Mark Perry’s *Sniffin’ Glue* Fanzine

Sniffin’ Glue was the first great punk fanzine and it meant we had our own punk commentators. We were miles ahead of most of the writers on the music papers...so Mark P. stated in *Sniffin’ Glue*. It was followed by a million others, but it was a great scene because it gave punk criticism to punk groups and people could get information about what was going on, even if they lived in Whales or somewhere... (Joe Strummer, quoted in Strummer, Jones, et. Al; 2008: 111-112)

Though English punk rock aficionados created a number of noteworthy fanzines during the early stages of English punk – including *Ripped and Torn* and *Zig Zag* – *Sniffin’ Glue* is often heralded as the most influential. Founded by Mark Perry following his exposure to an import copy of the Ramones debut album in early 1976, *Sniffin’ Glue* stands as the first English fanzine to focus specifically on reviewing punk concerts, records, and documenting the emergence of the punk rock scene. It was also, by Perry’s own account, one of the very first instances in which unaccredited aspiring music journalists manually composed, mass produced, and placed their

own magazine throughout London's record shops on consignment. Having established itself as the pre-eminent resource for punk-related information, *Sniffin' Glue* reaped the rewards of an expanding readership over the course of its year-long run (though, unfortunately, no distribution rates would appear to have been tallied in any effort to account for the fanzine's scope of readership).

Inspired, in part, by imported issues of New York's *Punk* magazine, *Sniffin' Glue* stands, from its very inception, as unique on one resoundingly significant basis: Whereas *Punk* sought to outline the standards against which to recognize and assess the 'legitimacy' of punk rock bands, *Sniffin' Glue* immediately began setting the standards by which to judge the authenticity of those participating within the punk rock movement itself. A quick consideration of the contents of *Sniffin' Glue*'s first issue – though dedicated to singing the praises of the Ramones – captures Perry's attempt to ascribe punk status as a burgeoning youth movement while also declaring that female artists had no creative place within it:

Somebody said to me the other day that there's no such thing as punk-rock...Nobody can define punk-rock, its' all about rock in its lowest form – on the level of the streets... there's something happening in London now. We've had some incredible gigs and great scenes. London's got a scene goin.' We don't need New York, we've got it here...we've got to make somethin' real happen here. Most British rock is past it now but the punk scene isn't. Let's build our own bands up instead of drooling over the NY scene (Perry, *Sniffin' Glue*: (1) p. 7).

I've always hated girl bands, singers, etc. Rock 'n' Roll's for blokes, and I hope it stays that way. (Perry, *Sniffin' Glue*: (1) p. 5)

Within the first eight pages of *Sniffin' Glue*'s run, then, Perry attempts to stimulate England's fledgling punk rock scene by eliminating space within the movement for female artists.¹⁶ Savage (1995) offers a similar account of why the historical contributions of female artists have been ignored by subsequent generations of punk rock aficionados:

Because it is young men, rather than women, who usually develop pop expertise, the music press is a male-dominated atmosphere. This reflects the music industry at large which, despite its air of bohemianism, is often a haven for outdated gender and sex attitudes that contravene the experiences of both musicians and their audiences. If punk was to be lads' rock, then lads would write about it. (Savage, 1995: 331)

In the case of *Sniffin' Glue*, the 'lads' were not merely writing about music: they were actively establishing the conventions against which authenticity as a punk artist (and punk subculturalist) could be assessed. As *Sniffin' Glue* was not merely the first English punk rock fanzine, but the first to persuade its collective masculinized audience to recognize themselves as a self-actualized 'punk movement,' Perry's comments had an impact upon the manner in which

¹⁶ Further examples of *Sniffin' Glue*'s inherent sexism are rampant. For example, in issue three Perry notes that, "Another female has been on to us [about] writing some stuff for the mag...don't worry, I'll check it before its seen by humans" (Perry, *Sniffin' Glue*, iss. 3, p. 2). Further, a review of Blondie's *X-Offender* single, one of the few pieces of female punk artistry to be considered by the magazine during its' tenure, reads "At last I get to hear the chick that I've been wan...err...you know what I mean? Those pics of her in PUNK wee pretty foxy and after hearing this crap I think I'd prefer just looking at the pics...If she stripped off it'd be great! Then again, I'm not supposed to like sex, am I?" (Perry, *Sniffin' Glue*, iss.5, p. 9).

male readers - having extracted their 'legitimate' knowledge on punk from the fanzine - received the art of female punk musicians. Perry's movements toward setting the 'rules' of the emergent 'game' of claiming punk distinction advance a clear message toward those approaching *Sniffin' Glue* as punk doxa: an affinity for the music of female punk artists devalues one's claim to a legitimate punk identity.

Sniffin' Glue's refusal to extend female punk artists credible coverage whilst punk rock artists themselves wanted equal ground within the field is far from the lone instance in which the interests and goals of punk artists clashed with and contradicted those of the fanzine media that emerged in their wake. Consider Perry's opinion that the burgeoning popularity of punk rock would surely not, as might be expected, lead to punk rock artists signing recording deals with major record labels:

...the record companies...you know, they'll be coming soon, all those big companies out to make more money on the 'new, young bands'. Well, they can piss off if they're hoping to tidy up the acts for the 'great British public'. The Pistols will be the first to be signed and I know that they'll stay like they are – completely independent! (Perry, *Sniffin' Glue*: (3.5) p. 4)

As history would soon demonstrate, Perry's assumptions on the prospect of bands signing with mainstream record labels was misguided. Though the Clash's Strummer, as quoted above, voices contempt for mainstream information media and their collusion with a corrupt state, the Clash nevertheless deemed it crucial to "take the bull by the horns" (Strummer et al., 2008: 112) and attempt to bring punk to the attention of wider audiences through the capacities of the

mainstream entertainment industry. As Lydon claims, the Sex Pistols, likewise, sought to infiltrate popular culture, noting that “it was quite clear from the start that the last thing we ever wanted was to sign with one of those small indie labels”, due to Lydon’s belief that, “if you’re going to make a change in this world, you have to attack from the inside out, and not be on the outside pinpricking your way in” (Lydon, 1993: 125-26). Notably, then, movements toward ensuring punk authenticity through maintaining distance from the corporate music industry were not promoted by the central punk acts of the age. Indeed, both Lydon and the members of the Clash seemed instead to recognize that participation with the mainstream recording industry was sought after, if not crucial, should their music and messages have any practical effect upon motivating the wider social milieu.

5. 4.5) September 1976: Punkfest at the 100 Club and Mass-Mediated Representations of Punk

The final claims to "authoritative knowledge" concerning punk rock are advanced by mainstream media. A significant caveat applies when considering the function of established entertainment and news media in shaping understandings of punk: whereas punk rock artists, their managers, and the punk fanzine press each strove to speak to a limited audience of current and potential punk subcultural participants, the mainstream media – and the news media in particular – disseminated ideas about punk to the wider English public. While it is important to recall the manner in which Western Marxist theorists – including Gramsci, Althusser, and Horkheimer and Adorno – approach the mass media as a social institution designed to ensure hegemony through popularizing the ideologies of the dominant class, an additional body of research accounts for the process through which mainstream media institutions depict ‘deviant’

subcultural groups (and adolescents in general) as socially and morally threatening populations. Stan Cohen's (1972 [2002]) account shows how subcultural groups are treated as cultural 'folk devils' through mass media depictions, which ties in with Giroux's (1996) more recent theories of representational politics, both considered below.

In studying the processes through which mainstream media assume the moral entrepreneurial role of shaping public perceptions of so-called 'deviant' populations, Cohen posits that mass-mediated information "is already processed...[meaning] that the information has been subject to alternative definitions [and] further structured by the various commercial and political constraints in which newspapers, radio, and television operate" (2002: 7). Cohen uses reportage revolving around two youth subcultural groups – the Mods and the Rockers – to demonstrate how a 'moral panic' swept throughout England during the spring of 1964. Defining moral panic as instances where "a condition, episode, person or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests", usually by mass media reporting which "presents [those groups] in a stylized and stereotypical fashion" (1), Cohen was among the first to note the ease with which adolescent subcultural groups could serve as cultural 'folk devils'; populations exposed to public condemnation based on their perceived embodiment of qualities deemed deviant, amoral, and dangerous by the wider society. Advancing a case study surrounding an incident between the two groups at the Clacton beach resort over the Easter weekend of 1964, Cohen notes the manner in which sensationalistic (if not fabricated) reports characterized a brief melee between members of the Mods and Rockers as a highly destructive event bordering on riotous behavior. This contributed to a general climate of public apprehension regarding adolescent populations (and the frightening specter of youth subcultures generally), a seemingly 'justifiable' increased police presence within common youth leisure

spaces and, ultimately, the passage of bylaws prohibiting young persons from accessing certain beach resorts. Cohen's conclusions revolve around the media's highly sensationalistic representations of the Mods and Rockers, which functioned to restrict further the liberties of English adolescents while saturating the public sphere with alarmist audience-capturing narratives.

Henry Giroux (1996) problematizes Western adolescents' lack of social empowerment on the basis of representational politics:

Youth, as a complex, shifting, and contradictory category is rarely narrated in the domain of the public sphere through the diverse voices of the young. Prohibited from speaking as moral and political agents, youth become an empty category inhabited by the desires, fantasies, and interests of the adult world. This is not to say that youth don't speak, they are simply restricted from speaking in those spheres where public conversation shapes social policy and refused the power to make knowledge consequential with respect to their own individual and collective needs (Giroux, 1996:1)

Giroux notes that, as youths cannot 'represent' themselves within the spheres of social power, the majority of information in Western society concerning (or representing) youth come from alternative sources: educators, the media, and other figures of social authority. Giroux also notes that most of the resulting mass-mediated representations of youth (from news or entertainment media) typically cast adolescent populations as sex-crazed, drug-addled, immature, irrational and violent. Representational politics, then, use cultural information channels to

present marginalized populations negatively in order to justify their continued cultural disempowerment.

Thus, 'punk' was characterized as a politically radicalized subcultural movement demonstrating the "immorality" of contemporary youth culture in general. Ironically, unwarranted media characterizations may have facilitated a process whereby the punk movement actually became increasingly violent. As Savage notes, "In [advancing] these [representations], the media engages in a self-fulfilling prophecy: more people will be attracted to the cult, which they then join on the titillating terms outlined by the news reports. The cycle then intensifies" (1995: 164-65). This is exactly what appears to have occurred following England's first punk rock festival: a two-night offering, held at the 100 Club and featuring performances from virtually every active punk rock group operating at that time. On the second evening, it is alleged that a concert goer was partially blinded as an unknown figure (reputed to be Sid Vicious, who performed with the first incarnation of Siouxsie and the Banshees the evening before) tossed a glass toward the stage from the back of the club. While it has, unfortunately, proven difficult to locate examples of mainstream reportage on this incident at the 100 Club, Perry's analysis of this coverage, as provided by the fourth issue of *Sniffin' Glue*, reads as follows:

Don't it make yer sick? All these bleedin' reporters holding up the bar getting drunk saying, they were there, they saw it all. They're washed up and old. I mean, take all this sensationalism crap about violence and punk-rock. If you wasn't at the 100 Club Punk Fest [...] and you read all that shit in the press about fights, blood and bottles you would be scared shitless! It sounded more like a feeble description of the Battle Of Hastings,

everybody thinks of murder and massacre whenever punk-rock's mentioned now! (Perry, *Sniffin' Glue*: (4) p. 2)

Meanwhile, within the very same column, Perry comments on the victimization that members of the punk rock community suffered at the hands of groups - dubbed "the 'footballs' and the 'discos'" (Ibid., (4) p. 2):

It's a bit silly, ain't it? I mean, we didn't wanna cause no trouble, we want to enjoy ourselves – possin' and liggering, shades and glue, sneers and bored expressions are all part of it. Punks are not girls, if it comes to the crunch we'll have no option but to fight back and fight hard! But it's silly because who would really wanna badly hurt someone? (Ibid., (4) p.2)

Beyond reinforcing misogyny in campaigning to rally 'the boys' together (while asserting his own claims for authority among them), Perry appears to criticize patterns of violence against punk subculturalists while advancing that members must fight not only in self-defense, but in defense of the integrity of the punk movement itself. In response to the onset of representational politics, then, Perry calls upon readers to recognize their status as 'punks', act to protect the reputation of the movement, and defend the practices (and ideological perspectives) championed within. By encouraging recipients to 'see themselves' as members of a distinct group, now united by shared values and the shared threat posed by 'outsiders', Perry can be taken to advocate that his readership engage in processes of punk ideological interpellation. Further, Perry appears to assume himself the authority to speak to a self-actualized subcultural group

while asserting the values and practices he champions as constitutive of that identity. Thus, the field of punk fanzine knowledge production promoted practices which would ultimately conform with mass-mediated expectations of 'punk deviance'.¹⁷ In any event, many first-person accounts of the early English punk scene would suggest that these trends in media reportage indeed do coincide with a process whereby punk subcultural spaces did become increasingly violent (Grey, 1995; Strummer et al., 2008)

5. 4.6) November 1976: *Anarchy in the UK*

Though the Damned were the first English punk group to record and release a full-length album (*Damned, Damned, Damned*; issued on the independent Stiff Records in February of 1977), the debut release of the Sex Pistols, the 7" single *Anarchy In the UK*, is heralded as the first concise expression of politicized punk rock. Released on the major label EMI, the single seemed designed to stoke cultural anxieties about the punk movement by providing Lydon a pulpit from which to declare himself the embodiment of an underclass rage primed toward instigating chaos:

I am an antichrist / I am an anarchist / Don't know what I want but I know how to get it

I wanna destroy the passerby / 'Cause I wanna be Anarchy

(The Sex Pistols, "Anarchy In The U.K.".)

¹⁷ It is also worth noting, if only briefly, that Perry's 'call to arms' column appears in the same issue of *Sniffin' Glue* as the Clash's (previously considered) first interview; an interesting fact, as it demonstrates that both mainstream public discourse and fanzine subcultural discourse had already developed competing narratives surrounding punk – 'punk as violent youth movement' from the former, 'punk as emergent category of identity' from the latter – before perspectives regarding punk as a consciousness-raising form of socially critical music had even been injected into the discursive milieu.

While the song enacts Lydon's intention of playing on the fears born of punk's sudden and "threatening" emergence (while advancing himself as the poster boy for an underclass uprising, forecast as "coming sometime and maybe"), its author concedes that his self-declaration as an anarchist stemmed from his search for a term to rhyme with 'anti-christ' (Temple, 2000). This terminology instigated consequences both intended and unforeseen: while succeeding in reinforcing public perceptions of the affiliation between punk rock, anarchy and a desire for chaos, the song drew the considerable ire of those committed to an anarchist ideology (Berger, 2008). The controversy surrounding Lydon's questionable use of anarchist terminology diverts attention from the song's central mission: promoting dissent through the very media channels which had rendered punk a subject of public discourse to that point. Though Lydon appears to claim that he intends to use 'the enemy' to instigate widespread anarchy, the song's lyrics suggest that Lydon actually intends to use the NME (*New Musical Express*; one of England's most popular music and entertainment news sources) to promote dissent. "Anarchy in the U.K." documents Lydon's intentions to popularize social discontent (and perhaps instigate more) through mainstream cultural channels. Lydon also implies that his media-facilitated stature as a folk-devilish figure, reinforced by his apparent willingness to assume the role of the 'anti-christ', will only aid his cause.

Meanwhile, Perry's enthusiasm for the *modus operandi* of the song is tempered, considerably, by the burgeoning popularity of the single with non-punk audiences. Offering a synopsis which likely corresponds well with Lydon's intentions, Perry claims that,

The Pistols are helping kids to think That's why everybody's scared, because there's some kids that are actually thinking. The Pistols reflect life as it is in the council flats, not some fantasy world that most rock artists create. Yes, they will destroy, but it won't be mindless destruction. What they destroy will be replaced by a more honest creation. (Perry, *Sniffin' Glue*: (6) p. 7)

While heralding the Sex Pistols for reflecting the disempowerment and sublimated rage common to underclass communities, Perry notes how the widespread attention surrounding the single had a detrimental impact on the 'purity' of those who would claim an authority to speak on behalf of punk. Perry chastises representatives of the mainstream entertainment press whom he accuses of invading the movement's own territories:

Over the past month I've noticed how every Tom, Dick and Harry writer takes hold of punk rock and gives it his or her expert opinion. Even the ones I used to trust are jumpin' on the bandwagon and fighting over exclusive interviews... That's got nothing to do with what's happening at the moment...leave our music to us, if anything needs to be written, us kids will do it. We don't need any boring old fart to do it for us! (Perry, *Sniffin' Glue*: (5) p. 2)

While Perry resists 'outsiders' hijacking the authority to speak on behalf of the punk rock movement, the very same issue of *Sniffin' Glue* suggests that he harboured anxieties revolving around the loss of his own distinction as an authoritative voice:

Like, sometimes when I'm hanging about at a gig or something people stroll up and ask what I do. I, of course, tell 'em to 'piss off'. They at once realize who they're talking to and then they say something like, 'oh, you're the guy who runs the *Sniffin' Glue*...er...thingy'. You see, most of the boring old cunts don't know what a fanzine is cos they're not really fans...most of 'em are layabouts who think 'punks' are the 'in-thing'. That's why every publication from the Airfix Model Magazine to the History of the Second World War is gonna have an article on punk-rock'. You just wait and see! (Perry, *Sniffin' Glue*: (5) p. 7)

From a Bourdieuan perspective, this excerpt reads as a blatant initiative, on Perry's part, to reinforce his own accreditation as a legitimate punk rock knowledge producer while commenting on the illegitimacy of those saturating the punk subcultural field. While chastising those unfamiliar with the fanzine medium as 'old cunts' and 'layabouts', Perry cannot help but boast that his identity and stature as the creator of the '*Sniffin' Glue* thingy' is recognizable by sheer virtue of his authentic 'punk disposition'. Thus, conflicts revolving around the ability to provide definitive representations of punk constituted individual initiatives to assert personal authoritative status. Indeed, 'truth claims' such as this served a dual function: reinforcing one's personal superiority in understanding punk, while staking a claim for subcultural distinction and the hegemonic ability to define, and speak on behalf of, punk rock.

5.4.7) December 01 1976: *The Grundy 'Situation'*

In spite of Perry's best attempts, the media figure who may have played the most significant role in shaping the manner in which the general English public saw the punk rock movement is likely Bill Grundy; longstanding host of Thames Television's *Today* talk show. Making good on his interest in thrusting the Sex Pistols into 'situations', McLaren scheduled the band for an appearance on the nationally broadcast evening program: "I knew the Bill Grundy show was going to create a huge scandal. I genuinely believed it would be history in the making and in many regards it was, because that night was the real beginning – from the media's and from the general public's point of view – of what became known as 'punk rock'" (McNeil & McCain, 2006: 258). McLaren's intuition was correct. Within the span of a single segment, the Sex Pistols (with their entourage) chastised Grundy for fawning over Siouxsie Sioux and, by virtue of Steve Jones' offhanded description of Grundy as a 'dirty fucker' and a 'fucking rotter' (Savage, 1995: 259), earned themselves a position on the front page of the following day's tabloids. Whereas publications ranging from *The Sun* to the *Evening Standard* each ran sensationalist headlines concerning 'foul mouthed yobs' (Ibid., 263-64), the right wing *Daily Mirror* seemed to attack with the most enthusiasm. Publishing a front-page collage of colorful headlines and bi-lines - "The Filth and the Fury", "When the Air Turned Blue", "Uproar as Viewers Jam Phones" and "Who Are These Punks?" - alongside an article recounting how "A pop group shocked millions of viewers last night with the filthiest language heard on British television" (December 02 1976 edition), the *Daily Mirror* seemed to confirm public anxieties surrounding the Sex Pistols' bona fide status as a moral and social threat.

In keeping with Cohen's analysis whereby a moral entrepreneurial media industry will select a viable target against which to mobilize a climate of moral panic, the fallout from the Grundy incident inspired the majority of those concert promoters who booked the band's

Anarchy in the UK tour - also featuring the Clash, the Damned, and New York's Heartbreakers - to cancel their appearances.¹⁸ Though the Sex Pistols' *Anarchy in the UK* single proved a modest commercial success, the public castigation of the Pistols following the Grundy incident would lead EMI records - already coming to the realization that aligning themselves with a band of self-professed agents of chaos might not have been the greatest public relations move - to release the band from their contract. As the group, nonetheless, retained their signing advance, McLaren subsequently claimed to have had the band sign with, be dropped by, and pocket the recording advances from a succession of major labels as a Situationist prank. According to McLaren's pseudo-documentary film *The Great Rock N' Roll Swindle* (1980), the band aimed to plunder the fiscal reserves of the mainstream culture industry while popularizing social dissent; quite literally turning the resulting rebellion into money.¹⁹

Mainstream media coverage of the Grundy incident made it difficult for punk knowledge producers to advance anything resembling a definitive representation of what punk rock was meant to signify. Having launched punk into the realm of public consciousness, and thereby rendering punk practice and dress susceptible to dissection and commentary by the mainstream culture industry, the Grundy incident produced equal measures of public condemnation and fascination. As Lydon recalls, "by 1977 the tabloids absolutely reveled in 'how to be a punk'

¹⁸ While the Sex Pistols were the only group formally banned from performing, the Clash and the Heartbreakers nonetheless opted to refuse to play any dates that the Pistols would be barred from in an attempt to strengthen "punk solidarity" (Savage, 1995: 269) between the progenitors of punk rock. The same could not, however, be said of the Damned. In opting to perform the dates as scheduled, members of the Sex Pistols and the Clash once again spoke to their suspicion that the Damned were less an authentic punk group than a band of imitators and opportunists; more concerned with advancing themselves than contributing to the movement. The Sex Pistols and the Clash were therefore not above, advancing their own accreditation as authoritative punk representatives by attacking others.

¹⁹ Ironically, and to this day, debates abound as to whether the Sex Pistols were truly a prefabricated cash-grab or genuinely propelled by a substantive desire to use art to popularize dissent. This debate loses context by disregarding the fact that the Sex Pistols were a single canvas upon which two artistic producers, possessed of distinct aims, struggled for authoritative dominance.

articles. They'd have centerfolds of these boring kids that they would pick off the street and dress them up as they thought punks were" (Lydon, 1993: 176). Similarly, producer, disc jockey, and documentarian Don Letts notes how the mainstream music press hijacked the 'authority' to determine authentic punk style from those composing the movement themselves. "The English press painted on how to dress like a punk", recalls Letts. "It amazed me how the ones who picked up the Daily Mirror newspaper second-hand would get the wrong end of the stick. The second-hand punks looked fucking ridiculous" (Lydon, 1993: 176). In keeping with Bourdieu's notes on the function of conflicts between field orthodoxy and the threat of an onset of 'heretical' populations, a wave of punk subcultural disaffiliation occurred among earlier converts. As Ingram recollects, "A lot of people who had been on the scene disappeared as soon as Grundy happened. It became very stupid very quickly and no one with any snazz wanted to be associated with something like that. They were into it for the clothes and the elitism and as soon as it became rock n' roll they didn't want to know" (Savage, 1995: 278). The English culture industry proved Hebdige's (1979) anxieties regarding the co-optation of the movement's counter-hegemonic properties by characterizing punk as less an ideological movement than an emergent lifestyle based primarily on personal aesthetics.²⁰ Punk's newfound popularity as a cultural buzzword usurped the 'authority to speak' on behalf of punk from the punk rock artists, fanzine writers, and initial participants before the majority of those constituting the former established their contributions to the subcultural record.

5.4.8) March 1977: The Clash sign with CBS; Sniffin' Glue Reacts

²⁰ Albeit years prior to Hebdige's warning, unwittingly subjecting elements of co-opted punk style to his semiotic analysis

At the moment when a subculture becomes visible and thus gains power, there is a great tension between the enjoyment of that power and the commercialization that, simultaneously willed and despised, is bearing down like an express train (Savage, 1995: 405).

Curiously, although the Sex Pistols had signed with the EMI label without so much as a begrudging comment from Mark Perry and his *Sniffin' Glue* cohorts, the fanzine's reaction to the announcement that the Clash had signed a recording contract with the CBS label instigated such a backlash that, to this day, it may stand as the most controversial agreement in the history of the artistic form. A recording advance of 100,000 pounds - entailing a ten album agreement which Strummer describes as being buried in the 'fine print' of the contract (Strummer et al., 2009) - led the Clash to hold the distinction of being the first punk rock act to draw criticism for catering to the corporate record industry. Much of the sensationalism surrounding the contract stems from Perry's supposed²¹ claim that "Punk died the day the Clash signed to CBS" (Letts, 2001). Perry recalls "being upset...I knew that bands didn't need CBS. There were enough small record shops coming up...It was a blow that [the Clash] got signed; the music business hasn't really changed, but if a band as big as them had [done it independently] then it might have been a lot different" (Savage, 1995: 304). The Clash's Joe Strummer, on the other hand, appears to regard the reaction as a first indication that the subculture formed, in part, around his own artistic output was beginning to develop conventions in opposition to the band's goals and - just as importantly - their own artistic agency:

²¹ This particular quote, curiously, does not appear in the collected *Sniffin' Glue* omnibus.

Because punk was a roots movement, any comments were heard in the community. Mark P., being a leading light on the underground because of his fanzine *Sniffin' Glue*, wrote that 'punk rock died the day the Clash signed to Columbia'. I remember thinking 'but we were never your toy to begin with' [...] I guess the original followers have an attitude of 'we were the first, it was ours', and got really bitchy towards new acts just breaking in to punk. Mark P. wanted us to stay homemade, to make our own records, which people do. But we wanted to break out of it, to reach America and be global. Somebody had to take that bull by the horns and shake it (Strummer et. al, 2009: 111-12)

In spite of having accused the Clash of killing punk following the CBS signing, it must be noted that Perry lauded the significance of the group once their debut record, the *1977/White Riot* single, was released in April 1977. Featuring a record sleeve which finds Strummer, Jones and Simonon assuming the search and seizure position while wearing their 'slogan' attire, the Clash's first single offered up two commentaries on the state of the English underclass:

In 1977 I hope I go to heaven / cos I been too long on the dole / and I can't work at all
Danger stranger / You better paint your face / No Elvis, Beatles, or the Rolling Stones in 1977

(The Clash, 1977

The Clash, 1977, CBS Records)

Written in 1976 during the initial emergence of punk rock, "1977" comments on the crisis of the English underclass: having (collectively) 'been too long on the dole' and resigned to the fact that

their situation is unlikely to improve. However, the song also hints at the emergence of a new, youth cultural force, and suggests that the optimal means of combating the 'danger' facing the underclass is that of 'painting one's face'; a quote that identifies the punk movement as a means of speaking out against inequitable social organization with quasi-para-militaristic connotations. However, as the final portion of the excerpt demonstrates, the Clash still vie for a 'bloodless revolution' in that the target against which they are mobilizing is the mainstream culture industry. When Strummer promises that there will be 'no Elvis, Beatles or the Rolling Stones', it is because they intend to penetrate the landscape of popular culture and modify it from within.

In spite of Perry's previous reaction to the CBS contract, *Sniffin' Glue* dedicated an entire page to a review of the single, reproducing the lyrics to "1977" alongside Perry's personal commentary:

I can't describe the feeling I get from listening to this single. It's so incredible that I honestly believe that it could change the direction of rock music. This single brings rock back to where it should be. Back in the hands of the kids. Kids who have to live in the poxy council estates and grow up into a life of security - a steady job, family and car...I hope that every kid who buys this single listens to it. Realise that we have got to act now. 1977 is the Queen's jubilee year, well let's make it our year as well. Let's get out and do something. Chuck away the fucking stupid safety pins, think about people's ideas instead of their clothes. This 'scene' is not just a thing to do in the evening. It's the only thing around that's honest and on our level! SG have been having a go at the Clash recently. Well, I admit that they're the most important group in the world at the moment. I believe

in them completely, all I said about them in the past is crap (Perry, *Sniffin' Glue*: (8) p. 10, emphases in original)

Perry had, in other words, experienced a deep-seated change in opinion surrounding the Clash and, it would appear, a more robust appreciation for what they were trying to accomplish. It would appear that the 1977 single renders Perry more appreciative of the Gramscian aims of the group, as he now accredits the logic of penetrating the sphere of mainstream rock music for the sake of changing its 'direction' and gradually mobilizing their fan-base toward some expression of collective action. Against this burgeoning appreciation of the Clash's pedagogic aims, Perry declares the superficial aspects of punk subcultural practice (the attention paid to aesthetics) as counterproductive and divisive, and attempts to retract his own comments concerning the bands' lack of punk credibility.

While popular narratives surrounding the emergence of English punk, without fail, cite Perry's quote regarding punk's death as a significant subcultural turning point, his subsequent disavowal of his own position would not appear to warrant even a footnote. Perry appears to grasp that his previous statements may have irreparably damaged the Clash's reputation as legitimate punk rock artists; hence, a rare retraction. Nevertheless, the damage had already been done: those punk subculturalists who used *Sniffin' Glue* as a definitive resource on privileged punk rock knowledge had already absorbed and entrenched the notion that any punk artists who colluded with the mainstream culture industry were inauthentic artists. While Perry came to appreciate the Clash's music and the idea that collective action required broad distribution, this case study demonstrates the difficulties subcultural knowledge producers encounter when attempting to revise past pronouncements.

Ironically, Perry's early promotion of staunch artistic independence within the field of punk cultural production not only tarnished the Clash's ability to speak authoritatively on behalf of the punk rock movement; Perry was unable to modify popular punk perspectives on the mainstream culture industry even when his own perspective had changed. Thus, by early 1977, so many punk rock knowledge producers had advanced competing representations of punk that reaching a shared conception of the overarching aims of the art form appeared improbable. The punk subcultural field had, in other words, already begun entrenching conventions which, though initially based on punk subcultural knowledge sources, no longer depended on their continued support to retain their validity.

The Clash released their debut full-length album, *The Clash*, in April of 1977. As Laing (1985) notes, the record was unique to mainstream rock in that it unapologetically strove to depict, and criticize, an underclass culture rendered oblivious to their own economic and social exploitation. While the title “London's Burning” evokes images of a city, much like the Sex Pistols' “Anarchy in the UK”, torn down by a mobilized underclass, the song actually suggests that 'London's burning with boredom' as the victims of systemic oppression, mired in false consciousness, dedicate their leisure time to consuming broadcast television and aimlessly wandering the streets as opposed to organizing for their collective good. Whereas “Career Opportunities” takes issue with the fact that the only avenues for employment include military service and taking up positions which the wealthy refuse (including opening packages for companies prone to receiving letter bombs from the IRA), “I'm So Bored with the USA” criticizes the process whereby England had become subject to American cultural imperialism. “Janie Jones” decries working class youth infatuation with a popular singer and prostitution ring operator, rather than challenging the predatory nature of youth work and leisure life. Finally, in

what the band describe as an attempt both to pay tribute to the influence of reggae and to facilitate some ideological bonds with Rastafarian culture, the album included a cover of the Junior Murvin song “Police and Thieves”; a song about standing up against the militaristic advances of an authoritarian system. *The Clash* Album graphics also contribute to its revolutionary themes, featuring a photograph taken during the Notting Hill riot on the reverse sleeve and quotations: one from Stanley Cohen's *Folk Devils and Moral Panics* (which finds a self-professed Mod speaking to the inherent enjoyment of engaging in ideological conflict); and a second, for which no source is attributable, promoting punk rock less as a youth movement than a class movement:

...there is, perhaps, some tension in society, when perhaps overwhelming pressure brings industry to a standstill or barricades to the streets years after the liberals had dismissed the notion as 'dated romanticism', the journalist invents the theory that this constitutes a clash of generations. Youth, after all, is not a permanent condition, and a clash of generations is not so fundamentally dangerous to the art of government as would be a clash between rulers and ruled. (*The Clash*, liner notes, 1977)

As the debut Clash record reached the 12th position in the UK charts and likely drew new participants to the punk subcultural field, *Sniffin' Glue* appeared to abandon its predilection for commenting on the authenticity of punk rock acts in favor of speaking on the legitimacy of emergent punk subculturalists themselves.

I'm really fed up with the punters on the 'scene' at the moment. At the Clash gig in Halesden there were lots of stupid kids who kept on acting childish by pogoing in front of the stage. They were going completely over the top by punching and kicking each other. It was like being at a fuckin' football match. (Perry, *Sniffin' Glue*: (8) p. 3)

Whether as a result of his disappointment with the evolving punk scene or the demands of his own group and independent label, Alternative TV and *Step Forward* (respectively), Perry would inevitably pass his editorial duties to longstanding contributors Steve Mick and Danny Baker following the publication of the 8th issue. Throughout the remaining four issues of the fanzine, Baker, in particular, would speak in support of punk's mainstream cultural popularity: "'How come groups like Clash/Pistols sign with big companies?' There's no point screamin' to the converted on privately owned/distributed labels that could sell about two hundred, is there? We wanna be heard, fuck being a cult. (Baker, *Sniffin' Glue*: (10) p. 2). At this point, *Sniffin' Glue*'s own legitimacy as a source for privileged punk knowledge had also come under heavy criticism due to the fanzine's decision to incorporate paid advertisements (many on the behalf of mainstream recording labels) into its pages. By the publication of the 11th edition, Mick was so disheartened with punk subcultural attention to aesthetics, the lack of logic inherent in resisting rather than co-opting the mainstream culture industry, and the preoccupation with putting up a punk 'front,' that he openly chastised the movement's seemingly superficial relationship with social mobilization:

O.K. stick safety pins in yer nose, I don't care if you stick them up your arse. What I do care about is, EVERYONE OF YOU MOTHERFUCKERS SHOULD BE A POTENTIAL

H-BOMB, NOT A FUCKING CLOTHES HANGAR. You're the victims of yourself. A lot of you believe what you read about yourselves in papers like the Sun, Daily Mirror and the so-called left wing rags like the Guardian. Are you that apathetic that you don't understand the lyrics of 'Anarchy', 'Remote Control'. You shout about being the Blank Generation, shout about getting beaten up by the Teds. But you don't shout about being exploited, by record companies, fashion houses, newspapers or anything that will determine your future existence. You don't want to end up like the Hippies do you?...IF YOU WANNA FIGHT UNITE FIGHT BACK AT THE LIES, don't take it like every other minority group, show them and yourselves that you do mean what you say, surprise yourself Punk, hit back stop posing (Mick, *Sniffin' Glue*: (11) p. 6; caps and emphasis in original).

Here, Mick seems to be commenting on two phenomena: how the sensationalist mainstream press has framed subcultural members; and how undue attention paid to "proper punk" aesthetics had become more important than the goal of working toward a mobilization against shared social oppression. As *Sniffin' Glue* would cease production following its 12th issue, this column suggests that the decision may be attributable, at least in part, to the notion that the punk movement had lost its way due to a number of factors, including the dominance of illegitimate knowledge sources and the entrenchment of subcultural conventions that derailed substantive momentum toward popular demands for structural social change.

5.4.9) May 1977: *Sid Vicious, God Save the Queen, and the Silver Jubilee*

While the Clash achieved some level of success by virtue of growing mainstream interest in punk rock, backlash stemming from the Grundy incident had rendered the Sex Pistols stagnant. Suddenly banned from playing the majority of England's live music establishments and forced to secure bookings under the pseudonym SPOTS (Sex Pistols on Tour Secretly), the group did not fulfill McLaren's intentions of transforming their notoriety into profit (Lydon, 1993: 231). Notably, this is also the stage at which bassist Glen Matlock would leave the group in opposition to Lydon's increasingly critical lyrics, only to be replaced by Sid Vicious (Born Simon Richie). In spite of Vicious' limited musical skills, his joining the band would ensure that the young bassist, a childhood friend of Lydon's, would become something of a punk rock icon. An advocate for the outwardly violent and self-destructive representations of punk as advanced by such New York punk groups as Richard Hell and the Heartbreakers, numerous accounts regarding Vicious' transformation following the emergence of punk would appear to suggest that he was attempting to embody those elements of punk rock which the mainstream English press had problematized. According to Barbara Harwood, the Sex Pistols tour bus driver,

[Vicious] had that childlike rebelliousness, but he was really soft underneath. But there was this sex and drugs and rock n' roll image, and I didn't know which was in charge.

When we were in Plymouth I got a sense that the image was in charge of him...It was a weird conflict, knowing that he needed the whole persona that he had, and that both he and the band depended on that (Savage, 1995: 392)

Sid Vicious would become the figure most closely associated with punk rock for the English public: first through his reputation for disorderly (and sometimes violent) conduct and

unpredictable stage presence; for his poorly concealed heroin addiction and on-stage self-mutilation (which, according to Lydon, constituted an attempt to procure heroin when the band and their management attempted to prevent that) and, finally, for his suspected murder of Nancy Spungen and his own fatal heroin overdose shortly thereafter. Brought to tears in recalling Vicious' death for the Julien Temple documentary *The Filth and the Fury: A Sex Pistols Film* (2000), Lydon correlates the bassist's downward spiral with his willingness to secure a reputation that conformed to representations of 'punk rockers' as advanced by the mainstream media. He goes on to indict the media and music industries for encouraging his increasingly self-destructive behavior for the purpose of selling sensationalist copy:

I've lost my friend, I couldn't have changed it. I was too young. God, I wish I was smarter. You can look back on it and go, 'I could have done something'. He died, for fuck sake! They just turned it into making money...ha, ha, ha, ha. How hilarious for them. Fucking cheek. I'll hate them forever for doing that.

(John Lydon, quoted in the 2000 Julien Temple documentary *The Filth and The Fury*.)

Recalling Savage's comments about a mediated 'self-fulfilling prophecy' whereby groups pattern themselves after their media characterizations, Vicious' public persona and demise constitute a perfect, albeit extreme, example of the process at work.

In spite of the difficulty which the Sex Pistols would experience in attempting to arrange live performances, the band did manage to secure a recording deal with A&M records. Though the Sex Pistols contract with A&M only lasted a total of six days - due to the band members'

ostensibly unruly public behavior (Savage, 1995: 319), the brief relationship would result in the recording, pressing, and eventual destruction of several hundred copies of what was to be the Sex Pistols second single: an anti-Monarchist number which, though initially entitled “No Future,” came to be rechristened “God Save the Queen”. Though “Anarchy in the UK” was done a disservice through Lydon's incorrect use of the term 'anarchy', God Save the Queen was much more successful in meeting its intentions:

God save the queen / The fascist regime / They made you a moron / Potential H-bomb
God save the queen / She ain't no human being / There is no future / In England's dreaming
Don't be told what you want / Don't be told what you need / There's no future, no future,
No future for you
No future / no future / No future for you!
No future / no future / No future for me!

(The Sex Pistols, "God Save The Queen"

Never Mind The Bollocks, Here's The Sex Pistols, Virgin Records)

According to Lydon, "Nobody had openly declared any anti-opinions of the royal family in ever such a long time in our ridiculous feudal Great Britain. I thought it was about time somebody stood up and said something – and I was more than pleased that it be me" (Lydon, 1993: 93). Specifically, Lydon's intentions revolve around bringing his audience to critically question why public tax dollars were being spent on ensuring the luxuries of Royal life (not to mention the public expenditure on the Queen's Silver Jubilee celebration) when swaths of the English

underclass were resigned to living in destitution. Lydon suggests that the first step toward alleviating the plight of the impoverished is challenging the monarchy and, by extension, an English class system based on passé aristocratic tradition.

When Virgin Records elected to become the band's third major label suitor - and founder Richard Branson unexpectedly approved the release of the single - efforts were made to synchronize with the Queen's Silver Jubilee celebration. Of course, McLaren could not resist the temptation to throw his band into another 'situation.' As the Queen was scheduled to participate in a procession on the Thames River as part of the festivities, McLaren procured a boat to ensure that the Sex Pistols could play the song (repeatedly) while trailing just behind the Royal procession. The consequences were, as to be expected, swift and cutthroat: Police boarded the boat and arrested most of the band's entourage (including McLaren), Lydon was violently knifed at the hands of pro-monarchists, and the music press forbid that the title of the song (and the identity of the band) be publicized. When the single debuted at the second position on the BBC charts, nothing save a blank place-holder signaled the achievement (Temple, 2000).

Nonetheless, as Savage notes, "the nationals resumed their coverage of punk [after the Jubilee holiday], writing about punk in general terms, as a movement 'sweeping' teenage Britain, and pointing to the Sex Pistols as the ringleaders of a sick, sinister conspiracy against the English way of life" (Savage, 1995: 365).

Though the Sex Pistols would go on to record their sole full-length record (*Never Mind The Bollocks*, released October 1977) and embark upon the American tour which would produce the band's dissolution in Texas in January 1978, the fallout from the Thames river incident (paired with Vicious' drug abuse) led to an irreparable fracture between Lydon and McLaren. Though Lydon had agreed to participate in McLaren's 'news making' schemes, he knew he was

absorbing the brunt of the negative public response and, in that sense, was being manipulated to serve McLaren's interests. Lydon suggests that McLaren began working toward funding *The Great Rock N' Roll Swindle* shortly following the Thames incident and, in so doing, attempted to frame the band's success as a direct product of McLaren's tactical intentions to build a fortune from adolescent rebellion and a succession of social breaching experiments. The film, sure enough, did suggest that punk rock was no more than an ideologically hollow practical joke. Up until McLaren's death in 2010, relations between Lydon and McLaren remained hostile.

By Savage's account, the break-up of the Sex Pistols reflected a fracture within a punk subculture, producing two, oppositional groups:

August saw the start of a vicious class and ideological battle between the opposing tendencies united by the Sex Pistols: the arties and the social realists. The arties had a continued interest in experimentation, the social realists talked about building 'a brick wall'...As was bound to happen, punks own moral authority – born out of a peculiarity sharp view of oppression – was lost in intolerance. (Savage, 1995: 396-98).

The 'arties' to whom Savage refers pioneered the stylistically simplified 'New Wave' movement to challenge preconceptions regarding mainstream rock and punk rock simultaneously. Merging punk rock's simplicity with a strong sense of melodic pop sensibility, these New Wave groups - including the Jam, Elvis Costello and New Order - would go on to achieve (and embrace) mainstream success while challenging strict musical forms as opposed to the hegemony of bourgeois ideology (Reynolds, 2006; Marcus, 1999). The 'social realist' bloc,

on the other hand, retained stringent counter-hegemonic artistic aims while disavowing the mainstream cultural industry. Merging punk rock orthodoxy with stringent Anarchist principles, Crass would not merely come to epitomize this 'social realist' tradition, but popularize representations of 'authentic' punk artistry as based, in large part, on the perceived transgressions of the first wave English punk rock artists.

5.4.10) Crass and the Feeding of the 5000

Beyond the world of police, courts, jails and asylums, we were faced with the perhaps even more sickening outside world. Within this world, respectable people, smart and secure, work, day in, day out, to maintain the lie. They know about the abuse and cruelty, they know about the dishonesty and corruption, they know about the complete falsity of the reality in which they live, but they daren't turn against it because, having invested so much of their lives in it, they would be turning against themselves, so they remain silent - the silent, violent majority

Excerpt from Penny Rimbaud's *Last of the Hippies*, quoted in Berger, 2008: 50)

Formed in 1977 by residents of a small rural art commune based outside of south-west Essex (known as the 'Dial House'), Crass consisted of a contingent of former art school students who, in part, wished to use punk rock as a means to promote environmental sustainability, (genuine) anarchist principles and, as Raha (2005) notes, " [incorporate] feminism as part of their vision of a complete overhaul of society, one free from all forms of exploitation, torture, war, and capitalism" (p. 68). Conflating anarchy and peace symbols, the "populist anarchist

collective", including vocalists Steve Ignorant, Joy DeVivre, Eve Libertine, and drummer Penny Rimbaud, are credited with "[reminding] the safety-pinned masses of punk's original message - mostly lost in the mire of media misrepresentations and fan behavior - [that] 'there is no authority but yourself'" (Raha, 2005: 92). Rimbaud himself describes the band's approach to anarchism:

We always end up saying we're people first. We would agree with most anarchist theory; equally well, we would agree with most pacifist or feminist theory as well. What we want to put across as people is that the world's a mess. It's a cruel and barbaric earth to live on, and we want to say, 'Well, we're saying no...we don't agree with what's happening in the world - we won't be ruled, we won't be governed, we won't be told what to do - it's our life, we've only got one of them. It's our planet, we've only got one of them. And we want to reclaim it, we want to say it's ours. And the more people who individually say that, the more individual people can live. It doesn't matter at all about the government, they can get on with their rules and regulations. We've got to learn to step outside of that and form our own rules, for ourselves, for each individual. And if that comes at odds with the status quo, then we must oppose the status quo, which is what we do on a lot of levels. (Berger, 2008: 127).

While Crass's opposition to the status quo manifests on a variety of levels - from incorporating multi-media into their performances (a somewhat conscious throwback to the Velvet Underground era of New York punk) to releasing records which were (purposefully) under-produced and disseminated through grassroots channels - they are nonetheless perceived as constituting one of the most significant acts of the 'second wave' of English punk rock. In

releasing a string of consistently poorly recorded (but discount priced) records focusing on a range of socio-structural ills (with topics such as capitalism, political conservatism, organized religion, and patriarchy functioning as common targets), Crass may deserve recognition as the first renowned punk rock act to take the spirit of the 'DIY ethic' to heart.

Though it is unclear whether Crass were inspired by conventions outlined through fanzines like Perry's *Sniffin' Glue*, their prior experiences of operating within the field of restricted artistic production, or through early indoctrination in punk rock subculture, the collective criticized the 'heretical' artistic acts committed by the first wave of punk rock artists. Though there is some consensus that the inspiration to form Crass came by way of an early Clash performance (Berger, 2008), they are the act which the collective would most often accuse, both through their lyrics and reflections, of facilitating the mainstream co-optation of punk rock:

Yes that's right, punk is dead / Its just another cheap product for the consumers head
Bubblegum rock on plastic transistors / Schoolboy sedition backed by big time promoters
CBS promote the Clash / But it ain't for revolution, it's just for cash
Punk became a fashion just like hippy used to be / And it ain't got a thing to do with you or me.

Movements are systems and systems kill / Movements are expressions of the public will

Punk became a movement cos we all felt lost

But the leaders sold out and now we all pay the cost.

Punk narcissism was social napalm / Steve Jones started doing real harm

Preaching revolution, anarchy and change

as he sucked from the system that had given him his name.

And me, yes I, do I want to burn? / Is there something I can learn?

Do I need a business man to promote my angle?

Can I resist the carrots that fame and fortune dangle?

I see the velvet zippies in their bondage gear / The social elite with safety-pins in their ear

I watch and understand that it don't mean a thing

The scorpions might attack, but the systems stole the sting

(Crass, "Punk Is Dead"

The Feeding of the 5000, 1978; Crass Records)

Offering one of the first punk rock songs to tackle the artistic form itself, Crass advanced a characterization of punk rock 'authenticity' which borrows heavily from the theory of mainstream artistic co-optation. Crass appears to suggest that, regardless of the messages contained within their music and the inherent logic of exposing the broadest possible audience to those messages, any punk rock artist who colludes with the mainstream culture industry should lose their credibility on the basis of their rejection of DIY principles. While elements of these lyrics problematize the commodification of punk style (noting that punk is 'just another cheap product' contaminated by the presence of the 'social elite with safety-pins in their ear'), they also condemned those participating in the first wave of English punk rock on the basis of their having 'sold out'. While accusations of 'selling out' had, long previously, been used as a means of questioning the authenticity of artists seeking mass (or, simply, broader or alternative) audiences - such as when Bob Dylan transitioned from acoustic to electronic performances (DeGroot,

2008) - this would appear to be the first (or perhaps the most salient) instance in which the term was codified in punk rock lyrics.

These lyrics imply that the overarching goal of the first wave of English punk acts (including Patti Smith) was less about critical thought than achieving fortune and fame. This constitutes a critical moment within the restricted field of punk artistic production, whereby a new contingent of producers aspired to modify notions of 'legitimate' punk artistic practice in order to 'delegitimize' the status of first-wave punk rock artists, and thereby install new standards of artistic credibility that would promote Crass' own distinction as the representatives of the 'new guard'.

Crass would continue to attack the credibility of the Clash, specifically, over the course of subsequent releases. Reacting to both the content of the Clash's "White Riot" and their rendition of "Police and Thieves", Crass characterize the group as punk artistic heretics with their 1977 release of the album *Stations of the Crass* and, with it, the song 'White Punks on Hope':

They said that we were trash / Well the name is Crass, not Clash

They can stuff their punk credentials / cause it's them that take the cash

They won't change nothing with their fashionable talk

All their RAR badges and their protest walk

Thousands of white men standing in a park / Objecting to racism's like a candle in the dark

Black man's got his problems and his way to deal with it

So don't fool yourself you're helping with your white liberal shit.

If you care to take a closer look at the way things really stand

You'd see we're all just niggers to the rulers of this land.

Punk was once an answer to years of crap / a way of saying no where we'd always said yep.

But the moment we saw a way to be free / They invented a dividing line, street credibility

The qualifying factors are politics and class / Left wing macho street fighters willing to kick arse

They said because of racism they'd come out on the street

It was just a form of fascism for the socialist elite

Bigotry and blindness, a Marxist con / Another clever trick to keep us all in line.

Neat little labels to keep us all apart / To keep us all divided when the troubles start.

(Crass, "White Punks on Hope"

Stations of the Crass, 1979; Crass Records)

Crass equates the Clash's attempts to develop ideological bonds between the genres of punk rock and Reggae with cultural appropriation; a process whereby members of a dominant culture adopt the cultural practices of marginalized populations and to neutralize their ideological content and 'cheapen' or dilute the significance of the art form. Though there is a longstanding history whereby cultural appropriation led to the mainstream commodification of cultural forms (with Elvis Presley's appropriation of soul and blues music serving as one salient case), it is also worth noting that this accusation made it difficult for the band to achieve their Gramscian artistic aims, facilitating a common ideology among a range of exploited social populations while retaining their status as underclass intellectuals within their own class bracket.

5.4.11) November 1978: Clash release *Give 'Em Enough Rope*

There was a point where punk was getting narrower and narrower in terms of what it could achieve and where it could go. It was like painting itself into a corner and we wanted to do anything and everything. We thought you could make any kind of music. (Mick Jones, quoted in Strummer et al., 2009: 169-70)

By the time the Clash had recorded and released their second album, 1978s *Give 'Em Enough Rope*, there is evidence that the conventions of authentic punk that Crass advocated had impacted the artistic expectations of second-wave punk rock audiences. Upon release, *Give 'Em Enough Rope* was widely criticized for being overproduced and consisting of songs which, too often, served to challenge the implicit boundaries of the punk rock art form (Grey, 1991). Truth be told, part of the negative reaction to the group's second album stems from the suspicion, subsequently verified by the band themselves (Ibid., 1991), that the improved production value of the album stemmed from CBS's demands for a record that would be palatable to American audiences. Given that the record has production value comparable to that of the Sex Pistols' *Never Mind The Bollocks*, it is arguable that the criticism instigated by Crass and other second-wave bands, including the Exploited and Stiff Little Fingers, was effective. In response to these criticisms (as well as the band's continuing goal of spreading their socially critical messages to the broadest population as possible), the group further distanced themselves from the rigid expectations of their punk fan-base with the 1979 release of *London Calling*; an album which, though subsequently heralded as the best album of the 1980s by *Rolling Stone* magazine (Letts, 2001), was initially met with further criticisms on the part of punk rock 'purists'.

As the Clash began to experience disillusionment in the wake of being chastised for failing to conform to strict punk subcultural expectations, they also began to doubt that their music could inspire substantive social change. Strummer's account of the 'socialist' aims of the band's artistic output, when pressed to reflect on the recording of *London Calling* (Letts, 2001) is illuminating:

Well, politically at that time, with Thatcher in Britain and, then, Reagan in the White House, it wasn't looking too great for the left - and we were always of the left. But, having said that, we didn't have any solution to the world's problems. I mean, we were trying to grope, in a socialist way, towards some future where the world might be less of a miserable place than it is, but...if Karl Marx was unable to do it, then there's no way that four guitarists from London could do it. So, we were, like, groping in the dark.

(Strummer, quoted in the 2001 Don Letts documentary *Westway To The World*)

Julien Temple's 2008 Strummer documentary *The Future is Unwritten* expands: "They used to ask me, 'so, you think you schmucks can change the world?' they'd say to us. They said it so often that you began to believe [that you couldn't], which is fatal. Trust thyself".

Following the release of *London Calling*, the Clash would veer further and further away from the stringent generic demands of punk rock. While the group made good on their intentions of infiltrating the mainstream and attempting to promote something akin to an (international) underclass consciousness, they lost credibility with punk rock audiences on the combined basis of the CBS recording deal, the criticisms levied against them by second wave punk acts, and their growing public profile. Their claims to punk artistic authority had been usurped by second-

wave punk acts, such as Crass, who endorsed Frankfurtian ideologies demanding that punk artistic authenticity be maintained through keeping a strict distance from the machinations of the mainstream culture industry.

The Clash did regain much of their status as credible punk rock artists and underclass intellectuals in retrospect, a response that might be attributed to the significance of legacy (or, perhaps, multi-generational transmission) within punk artistic and subcultural circles. While the punk rock and hardcore artists of the early to mid 1980s absorbed Crass's perspectives on punk rock's purpose and on definitions of artistic authenticity, those acts who would come to be affiliated with the rise of 'neo-punk' in the late 1980s and early 1990s - including Operation Ivy, Rancid, and Green Day - would reaccredit the stature of the Clash, acknowledging their influence and promoting similar ideological currents through their own artistic output. In the context of the English punk scene of the late 1970s, however, the Clash stood as the embodiment of a 'heretical' punk rock act as subsequent waves of punk artists aspired to challenge and modify those conventions and standards through which 'legitimate' punk rock artistry was deduced and accredited.

5.5) Concluding Thoughts

This chapter has demonstrated the process through which a number of competing sources of 'punk rock knowledge production' sought the authority to mold the ambiguous concept of 'punk rock' in a manner serving their own ideological and personal aims. Within the early American context, punk rock artists and knowledge producers concentrated on promoting their perspectives regarding the musical and aesthetic qualities correlated with 'genuine' punk rock, yet

remained willing to participate with the mainstream music industry in achieving traditional notions of mainstream success. Within the English context, and influenced in equal proportion by the social ills facing the adolescent underclass as well as the Situationist (and capitalist) impulses of Malcolm McLaren, some manifestations of punk rock entailed a considerable socio-political component. If the ideological aims of groups such as the Clash and the Sex Pistols warrant their classification as Gramscian 'underclass intellectuals,' penetrating the mainstream culture industry in order to challenge hegemonic notions of 'commonsense,' then the emergence of micro-media centers for 'privileged' punk rock knowledge and the ideological sea-change which occurred following the emergence of Crass contributed to the formation of the 'Frankfurt' variant of punk rock ideology. Once codified, the dedication with which subsequent punk artists and related movements abided with Crass's anti-mainstream sentiments act to undermine the influence of alternative ideologies and artistic movements. The processes of constructing and codifying punk, in a sense, was undertaken by a collection of competing neo-tribes as opposed to youth subcultures of common identity and shared ideology. Subsequent eras in punk rock artistic production reveal a long-running contest between these competing forms of punk rock ideology. The next chapter will consider the processes through which mass-mediated attempts to represent punk rock artists and fans as violent, unruly, and dangerous - in other words, as social 'folk-devils' - contributed, in part, to the formation of punk subcultural fields wherein expressions of hypermasculine punk identities constituted a form of subcultural capital and contributed to the entrenchment of a highly patriarchal subcultural fields.

Before moving on to consider the emergence of the North American hardcore punk movement, it is worthwhile to note that the Sex Pistols – with Glen Matlock back in tow, and without the involvement of Malcolm MacLaren – would embark on a controversial reunion in

the mid 1990s. Given that this reunion corresponded closely with a period during which punk had been identified as a possible ‘next big’ youth trend, many viewed this Pistols reunion as something of a cash grab in keeping with the spirit of MacLarens’ *Great Rock N’ Roll Swindle*. The fact that the Sex Pistols refused to write new material, dubbed their reunion venture the *Filthy Lucre* tour and concentrated on playing large venues and corporately advertised events did little to counter these suspicions. Given the content of an interview conducted between Lydon and *Guitar World Magazine*, however, there is some evidence that the Sex Pistols reunion served, to some degree, as a ‘situation’ designed to instigate critical reflections regarding the emergence of expectations of punk orthodoxy:

I’m not doing this for anyone else but myself! [...] We’re not championing any cause here, or waving a flag and asking you to rally ‘round. ‘Cause that’s what went wrong with punk in the first place. They all jumped on the bandwagon, so to speak, and started getting into uniforms and codes and strict disciplines, which was anti-punk. It’s not what you wear, it’s what you do and what you are that counts. And sod all the rest of that baggage.

(Lydon, quoted in Di Perna, 1996. *Guitar World Magazine*, 16 (8): 47)

Chapter Six. Hypermasculine Subcultural Practice and the American Hardcore Punk Movement.

Hardcore was an incredibly competitive milieu. Everyone talked unity but the scene dripped with division and rivalry and conflict. (Blush, 2001: 23)

6.1) Introduction

Just as the late 1970s marked the decline of the 'first wave' English punk rock artists, a new form of punk rock artistry, American Hardcore Punk, began to take shape. Though England's 'year zero' punk acts influenced elements of the American scene, advocates for this new medium of 'aggressive underground music' shared few commonalities with the British acts of the recent past. Perceiving the English Punk movement as obsessed with aesthetics and susceptible to appropriation by the mainstream culture industry, central progenitors of the Hardcore Punk Movement sought to forge a musical style - and culture - which celebrated independent artistic production while facilitating subcultural conventions expressing the rage and despondency of marginalized lower class youth. While Hardcore's lack of commercial viability would ensure that the mainstream culture industry would make few attempts to co-opt the movement, the development of a national touring circuit ensured that unique hardcore punk scenes cropped up in a number of major urban centers. Regionalized hardcore punk artists and knowledge producers, not unlike England's first wave of politicized punk acts, would endorse a 'year zero' mentality refusing the influence of previous musical movements and subcultures.

The diverse regionalized expressions of hardcore punk ideology can be illustrated through the contrasting artistic tropes emerging within the cities of Washington, DC and San

Francisco. Whereas Washington facilitated patriarchal 'position-taking' (where violence served as a form of currency in the symbolic subcultural economy), San Francisco facilitated counter-hegemonic art and the emergence of a stringently egalitarian subcultural community. Even though the era of American Hardcore Punk barely spanned a half-decade, a Bourdieuan discourse analysis clarifies how these subcultural communities evolved.

I apply a Bourdieuan framework in analyzing the genesis of American Hardcore punk rock in order to articulate how expressions of aggression and trends in hyper-masculine practice became codified as hardcore orthodoxy. Acknowledging the influence of hardcore's widely recognized progenitors Black Flag and Bad Brains, this chapter directs specific attention to two pioneering hardcore punk groups - San Francisco's Dead Kennedys and Washington's Minor Threat. Each used their artistry, and authority as legitimate punk rock knowledge producers to shape hardcore ideology and practice in correspondence with their own interests.

Beyond refusing the Situationist undertones of much English punk, most Hardcore acts neither sought nor expected to reach listeners beyond their subcultural borders, concerned instead with expressing rage onstage and vying for claims to hardcore authority when off. Ideologically, the American Hardcore subculturalists of the 1980s better resemble the lumpenproletarian English punk subculturalists whom the Birmingham theorists hypothesized. Structurally, Hardcore punk entrenched fields that codified expressions of hypermasculine aggression as claims to power and authority. As previously discussed, Connell's concept of protest masculinity can be used to chart the process by which select hardcore artists took on sensationalist, hyper-masculinized personas and facilitated environments where acts of aggression served as markers of legitimate status. I also compare and contrast how members of both Minor Threat and the Dead Kennedys would, subsequently, challenge hardcore orthodoxy

and lace their art with self-reflexive, highly critical commentaries meant to forecast the inevitable decline of the American Hardcore movement. I demonstrate how the American hardcore punk subcultural field served as a sphere where the adoption of hyper-masculine gender identities became a valuable form of subcultural capital on one hand, while contributing to the ideological fracture and political impotence of the movement on the other. Finally, the chapter will touch upon how the hyper-masculinization of hardcore would, in part, invite the emergence of the Riot Grrrl movement in the early 1990s and, with it, new anxieties surrounding the threat of the mainstream co-optation of the punk musical form.

6.2) American Hardcore Punk and North American Political Culture

Over the past decade, numerous publications and documentaries have attempted to account for the emergence of North American hardcore punk rock. These genesis narratives, almost without fail, correlate the rise and character of the hardcore punk movement with the presidency of Ronald Reagan; elected to the White House in 1980 on the basis of proposed economic reforms which, much like those of Margaret Thatcher in England, would undermine the working classes while attributing under-privilege to the absence of a viable work ethic. As Stephen Blush, author of the highly revered *American Hardcore: A Tribal History* notes, Reagan served as the common enemy against which hardcore punk enthusiasts across the nation would unite: "[Reagan] was the galvanizing force in hardcore – an enemy of the arts, minorities, women, gays, liberals, the homeless, the working man, the inner city...all ‘outsiders’ could agree they hated him” (2001: 20). As such, many American Hardcore genesis narratives suggest a similar scenario to that which produced the Sex Pistols and the Clash in England: an untenable

social environment suddenly rendered worse by the implementation of a rigidly right-wing, socially conservative governing body. Blush implies that the hardcore community constituted a movement open to all 'outsiders,' but the majority of hardcore groups and the scenes which emerged around them instead consisted overwhelmingly of one demographic group: middle to lower class adolescent and young adult white males who would collectively codify displays of aggression and violent conduct as signifying their legitimacy.

While Thatcher and Reagan both approached the market as an "integrative force [within society], producing order, justice, economic growth and constantly rising incomes...[with] inequality [serving as] the inevitable (and beneficial) outcome of individual freedom and initiative" (Levitas, 1986: 2), David notes that Reagan's economic policies were primarily designed to benefit "the traditional nuclear family...with the man as breadwinner and economic provider and the woman as economic dependant but consumer of goods and services in the market on behalf of her family" (1986: 139). In her estimation, these policies further contributed to broader trends toward the feminization of poverty, leading to the emergence of a "new 'underclass' which is being created through shifts in international economies [and] is chiefly an underclass of mothers alone, rearing dependent children, in conditions not of their choosing" (1985: 163-64). In a word, then, Reagan's economic policies, though debilitating for the poor and underemployed in general, would produce particularly harsh implications for single-mother households. Recalling chapter four's overview of Connell's concept of the protest masculine persona, it is entirely possible that the increasing economic marginalization of 'broken' and single-mother families functioned to subject lower class male youth to further deprivations which, in turn, promoted the adoption and embodiment of increasingly spectacular displays of hypermasculine practice.

6.2.1) Further Contextualizing Hardcore Punk Practice.

Assuming that Blush is correct in noting that the hardcore subculture appealed especially to youth who "were alienated or abused, and found escape in the hard-edged music" (2001:9), celebrated expressions of frustration and adolescent rites of social refusal subtly promoted the notion that power and claims to distinction might be achieved through the adoption of masculinized practices complicit with the Reagan administration's construction of the idealized nuclear American family. While it is crucial to note the specific manner in which English and American forms of New Right ideology would influence different forms of youth cultural response, I argue that four further factors influenced the unique directions that English punk rock and American hardcore would take. First, whereas many of the instigators of the English punk movement were rooted in close geographical proximity to each other, various cities across North America - including Washington, Los Angeles, San Francisco, New York and Boston - would develop their own highly regionalized hardcore punk scenes. Each of these scenes would, in turn, develop its own bevy of pioneering and heavily influential artists, its own channels of privileged knowledge production and distribution and, in many cases, its own ideological proscriptions and conventions of 'authentic' subcultural practice. Whereas English punk artists and knowledge producers would engage in conflicts primarily over the authoritative ability to define 'punk,' American hardcore artists and knowledge producers instead vied primarily for the authority to shape and demarcate 'legitimate' forms of hardcore artistry and practice within their own regions; a factor undoubtedly responsible for the fact that, to this day, one may deduce subtle variations that distinguish 'Washington Hardcore' from 'New York Hardcore', and so on

and so forth. Second, whereas the artistic pioneers of the English punk movement commonly pulled from their (albeit oftentimes partial) art school educations in order to align their artistry with explicit political purposes, the same cannot be said for the vast majority of American hardcore artistic pioneers. Rather than crafting art for the purposes of popularizing critical social thought and instigating class consciousness, the majority of American hardcore artists articulated their frustrations through the composition of incredibly short, fast-paced songs with direct, to-the-point lyrics meant to provide personal catharsis as opposed to instigating ideological dissent. As Blush (2001: 30) contends, whereas many English punk rock acts and advocates correlated their interest in the musical form with a desire to effect some measure of social change, the average American hardcore participant "suffered from depression, alienation, and frustration...[and] many of those kids turned against themselves as well as others. They craved self-destruction, often committing violence against their own bodies."

Third, whereas many of the English punk acts harbored intentions of using the mainstream recording industry in hopes of changing popular culture from within the belly of the beast, American hardcore artists recognized and celebrated their status as restricted artistic producers who had neither any hope nor interest in forging a musical style destined for mainstream tastes. By and large, and in spite of the presence of notable exceptions, it could be said that the field of American Hardcore Punk artistry primarily concerned itself with popularizing and perpetuating ideologies centered around 'legitimate' methods of artistic production (and means of demonstrating one's personal status within the context of the live concert environment) as opposed to entertaining questions pertaining to social mobilization.

Finally, and on a related note, the hardcore punk musical form was not the only underground youth musical style vying for the attentions of disaffected Western youth.

Influenced by such early acts as Black Sabbath and Alice Cooper, the heavy metal of the late 1970s and early 1980s popularized a particularly fast and complex musical form which, commonly, centered upon themes of rebellion, the occult, sexual adventurism and mysticism. Somewhat ironically, and thanks in no small part to the influence of the British heavy metal band Judas Priest, many metal artists (and their devotees) would gravitate toward aesthetic trappings better associated with Year Zero English punk; most notably, the adoption of leather outfits meant to connote an air of transgression (the aesthetic linkages between metal fashion and English S&M club style had yet to emerge). In many respects, aspects of hardcore punk and heavy metal conventions of style and taste appear designed to contrast with one another: the former celebrating the absence of musical training and aesthetic trappings, the latter relishing in each. As each movement strove to differentiate and distance themselves from one another in form, interpersonal barriers were reinforced by (and claims for superiority issued through) physical confrontation. Though heavy metal and hardcore punk would inevitably fuse in the development of thrash metal and grindcore, many aspects of early hardcore punk orthodoxy must be contextualized not only as signs of youth countercultural refusal, but in competition with rival youth cultural forms. Keeping the influence of these unique demographic factors in mind, it could be said that, above all else, the period of the 1980s American Hardcore Punk movement constitutes an era in which the Bourdieuan elements of the punk subcultural field became particularly pronounced.

6.3) Police Story: Black Flag and the Rise of Los Angeles Hardcore

More than any other group of their era, Black Flag's music expressed the despondency and rage felt by millions of Americans during the Reagan years, distilling it all down to the most visceral and heartfelt of rock n' roll moments. (Sinker, 2008: 79)

While I focus primarily on the emergence of distinct hardcore punk scenes in the cities of San Francisco and Washington, D.C., it is nevertheless crucial to acknowledge the influence of the Hermosa Beach, CA ensemble Black Flag. Though the band would not formally release their first EP, *Nervous Breakdown*, until January of 1979, the group is credited as the first, and perhaps most influential, American hardcore act. Formed in late 1976 under the name Panic, the group began modestly when Greg Ginn, a novice guitarist with an interest in the New York punk scene, aspired to form a band in the vein of acts such as the Stooges and the MC5. Enlisting the services of bassist Chuck Dukowski and vocalist Keith Morris - a self-described alcohol and substance abuser with no singing experience to speak of - Panic swiftly developed a reputation on the basis of their particularly aggressive form of punk rock music. Though limited to playing house parties and unconventional venues due to a lack of willingness, on the part of local venues, to book what was then perceived as a particularly extreme band, the group nevertheless crafted songs in keeping with their overarching goal: "Our statement was that we were going to be loud and abrasive," claims Morris, "we were going to have fun and we weren't going to be like anything you've heard before" (Azerrad, 2001: 17). Upon learning that the name 'Panic' had already been claimed, the group adopted the name Black Flag - simultaneously meant to reference notions of anarchy, piracy and a popular insecticide - and the famed 'Bar' logo which would, soon thereafter and to this day, become particularly popular with graffiti artists and tattoo enthusiasts. Combining Ginn's interest in progressive, dissonant guitar tones with lyrics that

paralleled the Stooges' focus on adolescent despondency and self-destruction, the group's debut *Nervous Breakdown* EP would speak to the possibilities of a new musical form in compacting four songs into a collective span of five minutes.

Beyond the eclectic mixture of Ginn's musical tastes - including his affinities for progressive Blues and early Black Sabbath - the band's intensity was also influenced by wider social reactions to the gradual emergence of West Coast punk and hardcore subcultures. As commentators unanimously note, Black Flag attracted police attention from the very onset of the bands' formation. While some correlate the considerable police presence at Black Flag's early shows with the prospect that authorities "viewed the band as a potential vanguard of a 60s style youth rebellion" (Sinker, 2008: 79), or perceived of punk as "a rebellion that threatened [the police], the American family, and society in general" (Cadena, quoted in Blush, 2001: 39), others read it simply as more unwarranted police brutality. As Blush contends, "[police would] find out where Black Flag was playing, and 200 cops in riot gear would turn up, plus helicopters. They'd rush in and beat up 16 year olds in what were 'police riots', where cops instigated trouble and caused damage" (2001: 39-40). Beyond the interaction between a Los Angeles Police Department which Cadena describes as having "always been pretty fascismo" (Blush, 2001:39) it is also interesting - though purely speculative - to entertain the prospect that Los Angeles law enforcement initially reacted to Black Flag and their fan base based on representations of 'punk' popularized by the British press during this same period. The period during which Black Flag experienced the most police hostility - following the release of the *Nervous Breakdown* EP and Dez Cadena's introduction as the new vocalist (replacing Morris) - closely corresponds with the Sex Pistols' ill-fated North American tour and, by extension, the onslaught of American media reports speaking to the dangerous English youth subculture having arisen in their wake.

By the time Black Flag released their second EP (and first with Cadena on vocals), *Jealous Again*, Los Angeles-based publications had, similarly, taken to reporting on the dangers posed by the band and their listeners. As Azerrad notes, editorials with titles such as "The Black Flag Violence Must Stop!" (2001: 22) would eventually ensure that, "between 1980 and 1981, at least a dozen Black Flag concerts ended in violent clashes between the police and the kids" (Azerrad, 2001: 20-21). However, back in 1977, the attention of the authorities (and, by extension, the press) would contribute to the character of the burgeoning hardcore punk music form and scene in at least two significant ways. First, according to Ginn, the inevitable arrival of riot police led Black Flag to compose increasingly short, compacted songs; a tendency which would soon come to serve as a hallmark of hardcore punk. "That's where we really developed the idea of playing as many songs in as little time as possible," notes Ginn, "because it was almost like clockwork - you could play for 20 minutes before the police would show up". (Azerrad, 2001: 18). Second, as Azerrad contends, "all of the media hype was now attracting a crowd that was actually looking for violence" (Azerrad, 2001: 22).

Azerrad correlates Black Flag's inability to find willing venues throughout the Los Angeles area with their resolve to become Hardcore's first nationally touring group; a claim which, to date, has cemented their reputation as the band primarily responsible for forging America's 'underground' touring circuit. Scouring the countryside for venues, regardless of size or location, willing to book the notorious act, Azerrad credits Black Flag for "[establishing] punk rock bedheads in literally every corner of the country" while "[inspiring] countless other bands to form and start doing it for themselves" (Azerrad, 2001: 14). The band can also be credited as one of the first acts to self-release their music under their own independent recording label. Though Ginn initially established SST (Solid State Transmitters) as a business centered on

modified radio transmitters, SST morphed into a record imprint once negotiations to release *Nervous Breakdown* on the Bomp! record label failed to materialize (Sinker, 2008: 80). Though the label initially functioned for the sole purpose of releasing Black Flag material, SST would eventually contract further hardcore acts including such notable outfits as The Minutemen, Saccharine Trust and Hüsker Dü.

Having demonstrated the viability of releasing one's own music when engaging in nationwide tours, a rash of notable, band-managed independent record labels emerged over subsequent years: The Dead Kennedys would establish San Francisco's Alternative Tentacles, Washington's Minor Threat operated Dischord Records and, though the significance would not come to be fully appreciated until the early 1990s, members of Bad Religion established Epitaph Records in the mid-1980s. Ginn and Black Flag demonstrated that it was possible to release music and organize tours without the support of the mainstream culture industry, launching the 'DIY' philosophy of artistic production. While Black Flag self-released their material as a simple means to an end, the same cannot be said for the likes of Alternative Tentacles and Dischord Records. The former appeared to make a polemical statement on the virtues of remaining divorced from the mainstream culture industry; the latter meant to contribute to a sense of regional pride and to secure the authority to dictate 'proper' hardcore morality.

6.4): "It's Time To Face What You Most Fear": The Dead Kennedys and San Francisco Punk

We weren't trying to tell people what to do. We all have our own political beliefs. Our thing was to try to get people to think.

(East Bay Ray, quoted in Boulware & Tudor, 2009: 80)

Accounts of the genesis of Los Angeles Hardcore - including Penelope Spears's 1981 documentary *The Decline of Western Civilization* - suggest that LA-and-area-based bands such as Black Flag, the Germs and Fear were instigated by urban poverty, adolescent boredom and an overbearing sense of social (and personal) apathy. Comparatively, testimonials accounting for the birth of San Francisco's hardcore punk rock scene note the influence of the city's progressive culture as the 1970s drew to a close. As Blush notes, "unlike law and order LA, in San Francisco...residents traditionally turned a blind eye to 'alternative lifestyles'" (2001: 102); the city was a comparative safe-haven for queer populations and other 'counter-cultural' ideologies, including feminism and multiple variants of progressive social thought. Further, whereas the progenitors of the Los Angeles and Washington hardcore scenes appear to have celebrated anti-intellectualist values, Crimpshrine drummer and lyricist Aaron Cometbus concedes that sizable contingents of aspiring punk musicians who came out of San Francisco and surrounding areas were "Professor's kids who never went to college [themselves]" (Boulware & Tudor, 2009: 420). Given San Francisco's status as a safe haven for progressive lifestyles and belief-systems, it is perhaps less than shocking that the area would, over the following decade, produce artists who sought explicitly to merge punk rock with progressive politics.

One group that epitomizes this mixture of explicitly-politicized American punk rock is the Dead Kennedys, whose very name was designed both to spark controversy and to reflect upon the likelihood that the assassination of John and Robert Kennedy signaled the death of the 'American Dream.' Formed in 1978 by bassist Klaus Flouride, guitarist East Bay Ray and vocalist Jello Biafra - a pseudonym that combined referents to "The ultimate plastic, useless, sugary American product [and] the worldwide symbol of the worst kind of genocide" (Boulware

& Tudor, 2009: 119) - the Dead Kennedys constituted a group, not unlike the Clash, formed with the specific aim of constructing songs centering around critical socio-cultural commentary.

Biafra, for his part, correlates his interest in media criticism, international politics and western cultural studies with his upper middle-class upbringing:

I was a news hound since the time that I could walk. I saw Oswald get shot in my parents' living room, live on TV when I was five years old. My parents would leave the news on either right before or during dinner and I'd be seeing things like bloody soldiers coming back from Vietnam, the race riots in the south, the Biafra war in Nigeria from where I got my name, and this was all discussed with me and my sister. Instead of my parents changing the channel to something more "pleasant" so as "to not upset the kids." (Punknews.org contributor 'Johngentile', 2013)

Biafra and the Dead Kennedys would continue this tradition of knowledge sharing through the compilation of pointed, well-articulated lyrics concerning a range of local and international concerns. The band's first proper album, 1980's *Fresh Fruit For Rotting Vegetables*, would include songs outlining the central tenets of critical theories revolving around the military-industrial complex²² and a critique of western entertainment proving eerily similar to Adorno and Horkheimer's (1947) account of the ideological function of the mainstream culture industry.²³

²² Consider these excerpts from 'When Ya Get Drafted': "Economy is looking bad / let's start another war/ There's easy money, easy jobs / especially when you build the bombs that blow big cities off the map/ Just guess who profits when we build 'em back up?" (Dead Kennedys, "When Ya Get Drafted". *Fresh Fruit For Rotting Vegetables*, 1980, Alternative Tentacles)

²³ From 'Drug Me': " Finally off of work / unwind and watch the ball game at the bar / Another potato chip weekend Is here at last / Drug me with natural vitamin C / Drug me with pharmaceutical speed / Drug me with your sleeping pills / Drug me with your crossword puzzles / Drug me with your magazines / Drug me with your fuck

Like the band's name, the album iconography of *Fresh Fruit* captures a defining moment in San Francisco's political history with a photograph from the White Night Riots of 1979, a violent outburst instigated by Dan White's lenient sentencing following his assassination of San Francisco Mayor George Moscone and Board of Supervisors member Harvey Milk (America's first openly gay politician). In this sense, the Dead Kennedys sought to educate its listeners (the 'Rotting Vegetables' of the record's title) by speaking to the pertinent issues of the day, and advocating some form of a reaction to the cultural mores and political processes they critiqued.

As Blush (2001) contends, the Dead Kennedys deserve recognition for being "the [San Francisco] ensemble most responsible for making hardcore happen nationwide...in their zeal to establish a united scene... [and in having] set the ground rules for everything hardcore since day one" (2001: 103). The Dead Kennedys were the first act to insist that their performances be open to all ages of concert goers, a stipulation that would have a considerable impact on the nature of American punk and hardcore groups in San Francisco and beyond. Biafra would later state that, in his opinion, "the reason there wasn't much going on in mid-79 was all the venues were over 21, and the fire was coming from people under 21. So we demanded all ages shows and [although] the music press dismissed it as a cheap gimmick [...] people who came to those shows grew into dozens of bands in the next five years" (Blush, 2001: 105).

Several factors made the Dead Kennedys unique among their compatriots. First, while it is true that the band, much like Black Flag, would self-release their music through their own Alternative Tentacles label, they broke with hardcore doxa in actively trying to penetrate public consciousness through novel and, arguably, situationist means. For example, the band accepted

machines / With a fountain of fads / More rock and roll ads / drug me drug me drug me me me!" (Dead Kennedys, "Drug Me". *Fresh Fruit For Rotting Vegetables*, 1980, Alternative Tentacles)

an invitation to perform the song "California Uber Alles" at the televised 1980 Bay Area Music Awards, a request which the band attributed to the ceremony's desire to appear 'cutting edge,' booking a New Wave act. In lieu of performing the scheduled song, however, the band instead performed "Pull My Strings," a song which bastardized elements of the Knack's "My Sharona" to argue that New Wave was a construct of the mainstream culture industry and a haven for disingenuous, profit-minded artists. While the first half of the song finds Biafra justifying his credentials as a New Wave star - "I'll make my music boring / I'll play my music slow / I ain't no artist, I'm a business man / no ideas of my own / I won't offend or rock the boat, just sex and drugs and rock and roll" - he nonetheless addresses the wider music industry directly in asking, "Is my cock big enough / is my brain small enough / for you to make me a star?" (Dead Kennedys, "Pull My Strings". *Give Me Convenience Or Give Me Death*, 1987, Alternative Tentacles). Thus, even very early on, the Dead Kennedys sought dialogue and cultural critique through unconventional means, including Biafra's Mayoral candidacy in San Francisco's 1979 civic election.²⁴

Further, as Sinker (2008) notes, the Dead Kennedys were unique in that, "instead of broadcasting traditional punk public-service announcements that commanded one to obey thoughtless leftist moral dicta, the DKs tried to encourage people to think for themselves by making it safe, however, uncomfortable, to question the limits of countercultural politics and anti-establishment behavior" (Sinker, 2008: 21). Biafra advocated penetrating the established political system and working to modify it from within, rather than outright rebellion. According to Biafra, "if [punk rock could have] a political impact, it will be greater if [bands] take the bull

²⁴ Possessed of little in the way of expectations of victory, Biafra constructed a platform which mixed satirical campaign promises - including a mandate that business persons be required to wear clown suits - with genuine progressively-minded suggestions, such as legalizing squatting in foreclosed buildings and legislating that positions in Law Enforcement be determined by popular neighborhood vote.

by the horns and come out more in support of political organizing and organizations" (Sinker, 2008: 29-30). This position would gradually allow the Dead Kennedys to serve as outspoken critics of the hardcore punk subculture itself.

6.4.1) The Dead Kennedys and a Subtext of Masculine Critique

While I will soon consider the manner in which the Dead Kennedys became increasingly critical of the punk movement, the contents of the bands' earlier catalogue serves to contradict the notion that hardcore punk, though awash in masculinism, hadn't any voices seeking to challenge hegemonic masculine tropes. Early into the band's tenure, Biafra would correlate problematic conventions in hardcore punk practice with the types of audiences the Dead Kennedys were unwittingly attracting: "When the surfers and the skaters picked up on punk and started coming to shows, we all thought it would be great to finally take this to the high schools and teenagers. But some of them brought their high school hang-ups and jock bullshit with them" (Boulware & Tudor, 2009: 83). Whether Biafra and the Dead Kennedys wanted to subvert hegemonic masculine practice or bring listeners to analyze their own gendered practices critically, the band's lyrics subsequently became highly critical of dominant notions of 'proper' masculinities. Beyond "Pull My Strings" exposure of attempts to 'sell' the wider public on intellectually bankrupt (yet well endowed) pop superstars, hegemonic masculinity came under fire on both their second and third full-length records. While "Terminal Preppie," from the 1983 record *Plastic Surgery Disasters*, mocks the superficial lifestyles of the socially privileged in pursuing post-secondary education, it speaks to the ways claims to masculine prowess are conflated with processes of conspicuous consumption:

I go to College / that makes me so cool / I live in a dorm and show off by the pool
I join the right clubs just to build an impression / I block out thinking, it won't get me ahead
My ambition in life is to look good on paper / All I want is a slot in some big corporation
John Belushi's my hero / I lampoon and I ape him / My news of the world comes from Sports

Illustrated

I'm proud of my trophies like my empty beer cans / Stacked in rows up the wall to impress all
my friends

Win! Win! I always play to win / Wanna fit in like a cog in the faceless machine
I want a wife with tits who just smiles all the time / In my centerfold world filled with
Springsteen and wine

Someday I'll have power / Someday I'll have boats / A tract in some suburb with Thanksgivings
to host

(Dead Kennedys, "Terminal Preppie".

Plastic Surgery Disasters, 1982; Alternative Tentacles)

Thrusting barbs at bourgeois masculinist culture, 'Terminal Preppie' mocks mindless obsession with status markers (including a dominated 'trophy wife') and empty ways to prove one's 'manliness' (including binge drinking and an obsession with sports) which facilitate (willing) subservience to the 'faceless machine' of commerce and industry. Biafra and the Dead Kennedys suggest that hegemonic masculine practices render those who perceive themselves beneficiaries of the system un-reflexive 'cogs' upon which the system depends. The band revisit

this theme with the release of the 1984 album *Frankenchrist* with 'Jock-O-Rama (Invasion of the Beef Patrol)'; a song which challenges the ideological functions of adolescent sporting culture:

You really like gorillas? / We've got just the pet for you /
It's the way you're forced to act to survive our schools
Make your whole life revolve around sports / Walk tough-don't act too smart
Be a mean machine / Then we'll let you get ahead
Jock-O-Rama-Save my soul / We're under the thumb of the Beef Patrol
The future of America is in their hands / Watch it roll over Niagara Falls

Unzip that old time religion on the almighty football field
Beerbellies of all ages come to watch the gladiators bleed
"Now boys, this game ain't played for fun / You're going out there to win
How d'ya win? / Get out there and snap the other guy's knee!"

The star quarterback lies injured unconscious on the football field
Looks like his neck's been broken / Seems to happen somewhere every year
His mom and dad clutch themselves and cry / Their favorite son will never walk again
Coach says, "That boy gave a hundred percent / What spirit! What a man!"

Another Trans-Am wrapped itself around a telephone pole
"I ain't drunk, officer, I just fell gettin' out of my car"
Don't worry about it, son / We were that way when we were young

You've got all the skills to make a damn good businessman

(Dead Kennedys, "Jock O Rama (Invasion of the Beef Patrol)").

Frankenchrist, 1985, Alternative Tentacles)

"Jock-O-Rama," then, speaks to the inter-linkages between hegemonic masculinity and competitive capitalism. Organized sports not only impress an ideology of aggressiveness and competition upon participants, but endorse these conventions as producing better access to the upper echelons of social power. The young athletes indoctrinated into this culture become victims of a self-perpetuating system which pits youth against each other in striving to equate (and celebrate) power and status with reduced models of strength and conquest. Youth put their lives at risk uncritically adopting these overblown constructions of masculinism. The song ties these processes intimately with the quasi-religious ritualism of high school football culture, suggesting that the football field now serves as a proxy for the Gladiator ring, promoting great personal risk for the sake of accruing status and distinction which might translate into positions of social authority in future.

While the Dead Kennedys critiqued hegemonic masculine personae throughout the early 1980s, other hardcore punk groups adopted key masculine tropes - including a propensity for aggression and a willingness to resort to violence - through both their musical performances and interpersonal practices of hardcore 'position-taking.' Concurrent with the rise of the Dead Kennedys in San Francisco, another hardcore punk rock movement took form in the city of Washington, D.C. where, a group of young musicians in the city's most widely regarded

hardcore acts, Bad Brains and Minor Threat actively popularized aspects of the 'jock bullshit' of which Biafra speaks so derisively.

6.5: Out Of Step (With The World): Washington HarDCore, Minor Threat, and Dischord Records

I didn't think I could [play music] because it seemed like everyone that did it were professionals. That's why punk rock was so important to me. I realized that here was a space that I could operate in the way I wanted to which would never go over with mainstream people whatsoever. To find that space made so much sense to me. (Ian MacKaye, quoted in Sinker, 2008: 13)

While West Coast acts like Black Flag and the Dead Kennedys established the touring circuits through which hardcore would slowly but surely spread throughout the nation, Blush (2001) notes that "the term Hardcore now implies the sound, style and aesthetic coming out of early 80s Washington" (Blush, 2001: 132). This is primarily due to the efforts of Ian MacKaye, an aspiring vocalist who founded two of the city's most significant acts (Teen Idles and Minor Threat) and established the Dischord Records imprint by the remarkably young age of eighteen. The Bad Brains, however, hold the distinction of being the first Washington-based hardcore act of significant influence. Though their self-titled debut full length record would not be released until 1982 - four years following the band's formation, and long after many of the groups they inspired had released music - the Bad Brains stand among the few Washington outfits to admit having been influenced by the English punk rock movement. As bassist Darryl Jenifer recalls,

"We dug the militancy happening in punk rock...it said, 'if you have something to say, say it! A lot of the things we saw our people falling for made us mad at the kind of illusions society was trying to create" (Anderson & Jenkins, 2001: 34). Taking primary inspiration from The Clash, the Bad Brains strove to inspire social criticism and attack notions of 'commonsense' while ensuring their own notoriety in creating incredibly fast-paced songs. In contrast to the decidedly aggressive lyrical content of many of the Washington Hardcore acts that would follow, much of the Bad Brains earliest material promoted 'PMA' (or 'Positive Mental Attitude'); a pop-psychological philosophy which suggests that retaining an optimistic mindset in the face of all challenges will lead to personal success. Anderson and Jenkins (2001: 37) note the irony that "a concept popularized by a rich old white entrepreneur was being molded into punk rock by young black men inspired by English kids they had never met."

The band's early allegiances to the PMA philosophy is rendered all the more commendable given that, "by becoming punks, Bad Brains had entered a largely white world. The band members were often harassed in the black community, where 'punk' was an anti-gay slur, but some of their initial experiences in the white rock scene were scarcely more encouraging...At Bad Brains' first club show...the band was greeted by racial epithets and threats." In spite of racial tensions - which must have been considerable against the backdrop of a city wherein impoverished African Americans outnumbered impoverished whites by a considerable margin - the band's PMA philosophy and intense live performances inspired the formation of many of the groups who would shape the nature of 'proper' hardcore conventions. Ironically, the Bad Brains eventually became closely affiliated with the Rastafarian movement and professed to holding less than progressive perspectives on gender relations and same-sex relationships, both in theory and in practice.

While testimonials meant to critique the linkages between English punk rock and Washington-based hardcore abound, there is evidence to suggest a correlation between subcultural 'legitimacy' and underprivileged class-standing resurfaced as hardcore began to develop a following throughout Washington. This is clearly demonstrated in the scene divisions that arose following the emergence of the Teen Idles, a group primarily composed of sixteen year-olds hailing from the comparatively upscale Georgetown neighborhood. According to Andersen and Jenkins (2001), the Teen Idles became targets of derision throughout the wider Washington Hardcore scene based upon the age and class standing of the audiences they began to attract. As a result, the terms "teeny punk," "teenage punks" and "Georgetown punks" gained currency as pejorative references to the Teen Idles and their followers. Nevertheless, by establishing the Dischord Records imprint with the sole intention of releasing the Teen Idles's own recordings, members of the 'teeny punk' contingent would eventually find themselves in a position of authority when younger crowd members outnumbered 'scene veterans.' This change in participant dynamics did not escape the band members themselves. As MacKaye recalls, "The older Punk Rockers in DC were off put because they thought we stole the scene. Damn right we did! But we didn't steal shit - we created something. We came with our own crowds. People say 'You guys came in and took over.' Took over what? We built the motherfucker!" (Blush, 2001: 136). Bourdieu's notes on the competitive relationship between artistic generations clearly carry considerable pertinence here.

Following the Teen Idles's disbandment, MacKaye and drummer Jeff Nelson founded Minor Threat, the act which epitomizes 'Washington HarDCore' and, for many and to this day, hardcore music itself. Indeed, the band's debut EPs, *Minor Threat* and *In My Eyes* (both released in 1981) would establish an extremely fast-paced (yet stylistically minimalistic) form of

punk rock consisting of short songs articulating adolescent frustrations with the Western mainstream and Washington's urban culture alike. In comparison to groups like Black Flag and the Dead Kennedys, however, Minor Threat emerged after the Washington Hardcore scene had been established. Therefore, Minor Threat became enmeshed in legitimized conventions surrounding 'proper' modes of artistic and personal conduct. Having originally been denied claims to hardcore communal stature on the basis of their age and privileged upbringing, shifting subcultural demographics and the music distribution infrastructure which MacKaye and Nelson had established put them in a position to dictate hardcore propriety.

While Blush argues that, "MacKaye's anti-industry, anti-star, pro-scene exhortations translated into a way of life for many [and] codified the [D.I.Y.] mindset" (Blush, 2001: 134), these intentions are rarely expressed explicitly through the band's lyrics. Instead, much of the lyrical content stemming from the band's first two records - including such songs as "Bottled Violence," "Seeing Red," "Small Man, Big Mouth" and "Screaming At A Wall"²⁵ - demonstrate that Minor Threat held few qualms with articulating aggression. Composing songs around this theme may reflect MacKaye's wish to use his subcultural status - both as vocalist for Minor Threat and co-head of the Dischord Records label - to shape the Washington Hardcore community according to his own artistic interests. Whereas Black Flag appeared most interested in pioneering new punk rock musical forms and the Dead Kennedys in critical public pedagogy, the central artistic producers of the Washington scene seemed most concerned with establishing an elite and highly exclusivist field of restricted artistic production. That these intentions reflect a desire to prevent the mainstream commodification of hardcore is, however, called into

²⁵ Consider the following excerpt from "Screaming At A Wall": "You're safe inside and you know it / 'Cause I can't get to you / And you know I resent it / And my temper grows / You better reinforce those walls / Until you don't have no room to stand / 'Cause someday the bricks are gonna fall / Someday I'm gonna use my hands" (Minor Threat, "Screaming At A Wall". *Minor Threat*, 1984; Dischord Records)

question, given MacKaye's own account of his personal intentions for the subculture. As MacKaye recalls, "I wanted to create an imprint; I wanted to [be] a part of a gang. I wanted to be part of a group...you could identify as a tribe" (Blush, 2001: 136). Further data suggests that MacKaye and his close circle of peers²⁶ sought recognition and claims to 'tribe' status as result of the manner in which the "Teeny" punks had been received by first-generation Washington Hardcore aficionados. As MacKaye recalls, "By 1981, it was payback. We were like, 'Fuck you!' We were gonna be the worst motherfuckers - we wanted to scare people. It was a form of intimidation backed up by the threat of violence" (Blush, 2001: 137).

Connell's concept of protest masculinity, where males of marginalized groups put forth hyper-masculinized expressions of aggression and strength as a means of (albeit symbolically) aspiring to self-empowerment and demonstrated status is relevant here. In this case, MacKaye appears to correlate his attempts to 'scare people' with 'a form of intimidation' centering on 'the threat of violence' with his initial experience of being marginalized within the established subcultural field. This passage suggests that, once having cemented his position as a significant figure within the restricted field of hardcore artistic production, MacKaye (and, as it is implied, additional former 'teeny punks') consciously strove to protect the legitimacy of their claims to subcultural status by, to quote Connell directly, "[saving] face" and "keeping up a front" through the use of intimidation and the adoption of an aggressive persona.

The onset of Reagan neo-liberalism and resulting trends in the feminization of poverty incited a pair of substantially contrasting reactions in the work of the Dead Kennedys and Minor Threat. Whereas Biafra and the Dead Kennedys critiqued the role of hyper-masculinism within Western mainstream culture, the music and off-stage personas of the members of Minor Threat

²⁶ This circle of peers included Washingtonian Henry Garfield, who would subsequently relocate to Los Angeles, change his name to Henry Rollins, and become the Black Flag's fourth and most recognizable vocalist.

promoted forms of status and distinction complicit with dominant gender practices. The bands had drastically different artistic aims. The Dead Kennedys wanted to challenge 'commonsense' cultural tropes that function to prop up and perpetuate a patriarchy that victimizes members of both sexes. Minor Threat used these same tropes to claim and reinforce authority over a Washington hardcore scene which had once relegated MacKaye and his cohort to the least privileged position within the scene hierarchy. Minor threat did unto others as was done unto them.

This is not meant to suggest, however, that MacKaye and Minor Threat are uniquely accountable for the emergence and codification of violent subcultural practices throughout America's concurrently emerging hardcore punk communities. As with Washington, the scenes taking shape in Los Angeles and San Francisco likewise developed conventions of aggressive practices and socially threatening styles of dress. Focusing primarily on the cities of San Francisco and Los Angeles, I argue that a number of different factors contributed to the subcultural codification of expressions of aggression: some emerging from within hardcore communities themselves; others instigated by the manner in which the surrounding 'mainstream' society negatively reacted to their presence.

6.6: "How Can You Explain the Violence?": Internal and External Factors Considered

To this point, I have touched upon a select few of the interrelated factors that contributed to the Hardcore subculture's entrenchment of hyper-masculine practices: the fast-paced and aggressive nature of the hardcore musical form, the considerable police presence (and instances of brutality) which plagued the movement and how artists such as MacKaye and, later, Rollins

implicitly popularized the practice of vying for claims to subcultural status through demonstrations of aggression. It is, of course, also necessary to consider how the parent society's reaction to the relatively swift emergence of the hardcore punk rock culture influenced the formation of conventions in practice and style which would constitute hardcore orthodoxy. Whether the climate of sensationalistic press which surrounded the first wave of politically-minded English punk acts informed American public fears, or the new music simply offended the cultural sensibilities of the communities in which Hardcore had begun to take root, testimonials touching upon the *literal* dangers of being 'punk' are rampant. As MacKaye recalls, "It was completely violent, to the point where you'd walk down the street and suddenly be chased by hillbillies calling you 'Faggot!' and beating the shit out of you. There was [even] a Georgetown gang called the Punkbeaters, who'd beat up lone punk rockers"(Blush, 2001: 24). Speaking to the climate in Los Angeles, Social Distortion's Mike Ness recalls a comparable situation: "If you walked down the street [in Southern California] with a leather jacket and dyed red hair, you were making a decision to get into some sort of confrontation...there [were] angry parents, construction workers; they'd drive by and yell 'Faggot!' - we'd flip them off and they'd turn around and come back and we'd fight" (Blush, 2001: 25). While some, including Bad Religion vocalist Greg Graffin, contend that the urban climate was so hostile as to drive a sizable contingent of participants away from the Hardcore movement (Graffin and Olson, 2010), others, such as Jimmy Gestapo of the New York hardcore group Murphy's Law, began to take on aesthetic tropes meant to serve as methods of self-defense:

Everybody got beat down so much for being punk rock that they became hardcore. We got beat into hardcore. It was fun running around with spiked hair and bondage [belts], but I

got beat into shaving my head, putting boots on, and arming myself with a chain belt. I evolved my fashion statement into a function. That's what everyone around me did.

(Blush, 2001:25)

Nevertheless, it would be disingenuous to correlate the onset of hardcore hyper-masculine practices with the unsavory reactions of the parent culture alone. As in the case of the Washington scene, many participants in the hardcore communities in Los Angeles and San Francisco used violence to demonstrate legitimate subcultural standing, a process, once again, stemming from the recognition of class differences among those gravitating toward the hardcore subcultural field. For example, it would appear that the practice of 'Slam-Dancing', which Blush describes as a form of dance centered around "strutting around in a circle, swinging your arms around and hitting everything within your reach" (Blush, 2001: 22) was instigated along the West Coast as the subculture began to draw participants from the privileged Huntington Beach area. Initially termed "The Huntington Beach Strut" and popularized within emergent Hardcore communities "because it separated the kids from the poseurs and adults" (Blush, 2001: 22), Anderson and Jenkins (2001) note that "such a dance was bound to dismay less macho elements in the crowd - which was just what the Huntington Beach kids wanted" (2001: 66). It would appear, then, that slam-dancers attempted to assert the legitimacy of their subcultural standing by engaging in expressions of aggression and the embodied conquest of territory. In so doing, however, these participants played to the mediated expectations of the wider culture, thus reinforcing widely-recognized correlations between hardcore music and violence and justifying authoritative measures directed at repressing the culture.

The establishment of the underground touring circuit ensured that subcultural practices such as slam-dancing would find national transmission, together with the emergence of a process whereby claims to regional superiority became increasingly prevalent. Once again, practices developed and popularized by the Washington Hardcore contingent would appear to have bred regional hostilities; particularly in considering how MacKaye, Rollins "and their circle...travelled as a wolfpack to NYC 'to represent'" (Blush, 2001: 136). Recalls Rollins, "At that point, we were more 'hardcore' than anyone. There'd be people on the floor with cigarettes, talking while the band played. We'd just hammer these people. We were definitely into the 'DC's in the house' thing...that's what we liked to do" (Blush, 2001: 137). Thus, by all accounts, acts of violence and aggression served as a nationally recognized form of subcultural currency and, unsurprisingly, led regionally-bound hardcore enthusiasts to see groups and communities taking shape elsewhere as competitors, as opposed to compatriots.

By 1981, the entrenchment of conventions based around demonstrating status through hyper-masculine practice and violence had incurred two immediate, unsavory effects. First, as Anderson and Jenkins contend, hyper-masculine hardcore conventions "had barred most women from both the dance floor and the stage...[and] the women who did continue attending hardcore shows had to do so on the terms set by their male peers" (2001; 93). As *Banned In DC* author Cynthia Connelly concedes, there were women who were "big into Hardcore...but when moshing became violent and extremely masculine, there was nothing funny about it...as it got more and more hardcore, I got more and more disinterested. By '83, I was 100% disinterested. Most women I knew bailed" (Blush, 2001: 35). Second, as hardcore style came to resemble closely white supremacist 'skinhead' youth movements, wider publics increasingly saw hardcore as a neo-Nazi movement.

Against the contention that white supremacist elements did not actually begin to penetrate the Hardcore communities in Washington and San Francisco until years later, there were grounds on which outsiders could identify racially hostile undertones in hardcore music. For example, Black Flag's 1980 EP *Jealous Again* includes a song, entitled "White Minority," which addresses the prospect that Los Angeles' minority populations would soon come to outnumber (and, it is implied, threaten) the dominant Caucasian population:

We're gonna be a white minority / We won't listen to the majority / We're gonna feel inferiority /

We're gonna be white minority

White pride You're an American / I'm gonna hide Anywhere I can

Gonna be a white minority / We don't believe there's a possibility / Well you just wait and see

(Black Flag, "White Minority".

Jealous Again, 1980; SST Records)

Recalling that Los Angeles continues to serve as a hotbed for tense racial relations, it is not surprising that 'White Minority' was taken at face value at the time of its release. Nevertheless, Ginn would later go on record attempting to dispel the notion that 'White Minority' was meant as anything more than a tongue-in-cheek criticism of racially-based fears. Recalls Ginn:

The idea behind [White Minority] is to take somebody that thinks in terms of "White Minority" as being afraid of that, and make them look as outrageously stupid as possible.

The fact that we had a Puerto Rican [Ron Reyes] singing it was what made the sarcasm of it obvious to me. Some people seem to want to take it another way, and somehow think that we'd be so dumb to where a Puerto Rican guy would sing it and it would be - I don't know how they could consider that racist, but people took it that way. (Tonooka, 1981)

The song's intended 'sarcasm' may have been lost upon audiences who did not have the ability to watch the band in a live setting. The *Jealous Again* EP did not include a photograph of the group, and Reyes' vocal performance was credited to one 'Chavo Pederast.' While this decision was meant as a slight against Reyes, who had left Black Flag prior to *Jealous Again*'s release, those who had misconstrued the sarcasm of "White Minority" may have similarly interpreted the name 'Chavo Pederast' as a slight on Hispanic culture. Whatever controversy Black Flag might have initiated pales in comparison to what Minor Threat would instigate with the 1981 release of the song "Guilty of Being White." MacKaye would later note that "'Guilty Of Being White' was a song I wrote growing up in DC, being part of the minority - the white population [...] people were judging me on the color of my skin, so I wrote what I thought was a really direct anti-racist song...[but] it played totally different in other contexts" (Blush, 2001: 30). While it would appear that MacKaye's intentions were to lash out against discrimination on the basis of his skin color, it is not difficult to imagine how the song lyrics could have been read:

I'm sorry for something I didn't do / Lynched somebody But I don't know who /

You blame me for slavery / A hundred years before I was born /

I'm a convict of a racist crime / I've only served 19 years of my time / Guilty of being white

(Minor Threat, "Guilty of Being White".

In My Eyes, 1981; Dischord Records)

Subsequent to the song's inclusion on the *Minor Threat* EP, MacKaye learned that the song not only 'played differently in other contexts', but it attracted white supremacists to hardcore communities around the globe. As MacKaye would later note, "I didn't think anybody outside DC would ever hear this song. It's weird for me to go to Poland and hear kids say, 'Guilty of Being White' is a very good song. We are white power.' [...] Slayer covered it and changed the last line to 'guilty of being *right*.' It's so offensive to me" (Blush, 2001: 30-31; italics in original).

By the end of 1981, the Dead Kennedys would also release material that aligned hardcore punk with white supremacist movements in the eyes of subcultural spectators and the wider society. Having witnessed how violence and macho posturing were endangering audience members and driving people away from the San Francisco hardcore community, Biafra and the Dead Kennedys decided to speak out against the development of masculinist punk rock conventions with the 1981 song "Nazi Punks Fuck Off":

Punk ain't no religious cult / Punk means thinking for yourself /

You ain't hardcore cos you spike your hair / When a jock still lives inside your head

If you've come to fight, get outta here / You ain't no better than the bouncers

We ain't trying to be police / When you ape the cops it ain't anarchy

You still think swastikas look cool / The real Nazis run your schools

They're coaches, businessmen and cops / In a real fourth Reich you'll be the first to go / unless
you think

Nazi punks / Nazi punks / Nazi punks / Fuck off!

(Dead Kennedys, "Nazi Punks Fuck Off".

In God We Trust, Inc., 1981; Alternative Tentacles

Speaking to the *Los Angeles Times* in August 2012, Biafra recalls,

I wrote that song in 1981, and at the time, it was aimed at people who were really violent on the dance floor [...hardcore] began to attract people showing up just to see if they could get in fights in the pit or jump off stage and punch people in the back of the head and run away [...] People started asking me, "Are you down with this? Things are changing, the audience is younger, hard core is coming up and it's a more extreme form of punk," and I liked that kind of music, but I thought if we're gonna play this music, we need to distance ourselves from that side of the scene. The initial premise of the song was "You violent people at shows are acting like a bunch of Nazis," and that was as far as it went. (Brown, 2012).

In spite of Biafra's contention that the song was meant to accuse those engaging in hyper-masculine subcultural practices of acting like white supremacists, it was interpreted to assume the presence of a white supremacist contingent in the scene. Biafra challenges more than one 'problematic' contingent of hardcore subculturalists through the song: those who made the live

hardcore environment a dangerous place, as well as those who had appropriated the use of the swastika as a punk fashion accessory. While 'insider knowledge' of punk's aesthetic tradition of appropriating Nazi imagery would make the song's meaning clear, others might not realize that Biafra uses the term in a pejorative sense as opposed to a literal one. The initiated within the San Francisco hardcore punk scene understood the message ('we have a problem with people acting like Nazis'), but the sensationalistic nature of the title and public anxieties arrived at a different reading: namely, 'we have a Nazi problem.' Combined with previous controversies stemming from Black Flag's 'White Minority' and Minor Threat's 'Guilty Of Being White,' it might be said that hardcore artists attempted to critique racism in a manner which largely reinforced the perceived relationship between hardcore and neo-Nazi movements amongst members of the mainstream – not to mention actual white supremacist factions. A variety of commentaries contend that the hardcore movement began to attract contingents of white supremacists throughout the early 1980s. As Blush notes, "contrary to what some people say, there were not hordes of goose-stepping skinheads at hardcore shows. But a lot of kids who read about that would emulate skinhead behavior. There arose such hysteria over a perceived problem that, by the mid 80s, there became one" (Blush, 2001: 32). Indeed, even Biafra contends that 'Nazi Punks Fuck Off' contributed to a situation in which "the real ideological Nazis began coming out of the closet" (Brown, 2012). This process was especially pronounced in San Francisco where, as Maximun Rocknroll co-founder Jeff Bale notes, "there was a period in the mid-80s where it was really unpleasant going to a punk show because there'd be a face-off between factions of skins and punks. You never knew if you were going to get into a brawl" (Boulware & Tudor, 2009; 142).

6.7: San Francisco, *Maximum Rockroll* and the Entrenchment of Punk Artistic Expectations

We really felt like we were bringing people together and catalyzing and stimulating an international punk scene which had previously been pretty separated, in many respects. We exposed unknown bands and unknown scenes and unknown magazines. If there's any justice in the world, 90 percent of the world's punk rockers would be thanking Maximum RNR for all the shit we did for them.

- *Maximum Rockroll* co-founder Jeff Bale; quoted in Boulware and Tudor (2009: 189)

While the Dead Kennedys were a moral entrepreneurial force within the San Francisco hardcore punk scene, their authority was not uncontested by other factions within the subculture. As the Dead Kennedys and the relocated Austin, Texas hardcore act MDC (Millions of Dead Cops) advanced a clear agenda of popularizing systemic criticism and promoting critical leftist politics, both acts experienced something of a backlash on the basis of having assumed positions of subcultural authority. As James Angus Black, former roadie for a number of prominent East Coast punk rock acts (including Verbal Abuse and D.R.I.), recalls:

There wasn't supposed to be a bunch of egos in the punk scene. The bands and the people are one and the same [...Biafra] acts like he invented punk rock in San Francisco. He was just a part of it. He really thought he was going to be the benevolent leader of all of us, and we were going to follow in his footsteps. Most of the kids involved in that scene had enough of people telling them what to do. They just wanted some place to hang out and

get high and listen to music, and have fun and forget all about the bullshit for a while. And here comes Jello, 'wa wha wha you shouldn't be doing that, you should be more political.' He was just another authority figure. (Boulware & Tudor, 2009: 82)

While acts like the Dead Kennedys and MDC attracted criticism for attempting to determine trends in punk subcultural orthodoxy and reinforce their personal claims to status at once, the highly influential San Francisco based fanzine *Maximum Rockroll* (*MRR*) further sought to correlate punk with explicit leftist politics and promote stringent expectations of artistic and subcultural practice. Founded in 1981 by Tim Yohannon and Jeff Bale, described as "aging counterculturalists who sought to force the implicit politics of punk to the surface, into a more conscious, systematic, and active opposition to Reaganism and American society at large (Anderson and Jenkins 2001: 114), *MRR* would, as with Perry's *Sniffin' Glue*, endorse cost-effective production methods and 'underground' distribution networks as a means of providing readers with artist interviews, album reviews, and live concert information. Like Perry, Yohannon and Bale would use the platform of the fanzine as a means of popularizing the notion that 'authentic' punk artistic practice hinged upon abiding by those conventions endorsed within a restricted field of cultural production. As *MRR* contributor Ruth Schwartz recalls,

MRR wanted to change the world. We wanted to spread DIY attitudes, and we wanted the people to rise up against their oppressors, and party! And do right and do better.

Everything that was published in the magazine was about that. It was what punk rock was all about, makin' noise and bein' crazy and changing the world every day. Without letting corporate culture have its way with us (Boulware & Tudor, 2009: 186-87).

However, and in spite of the jovial manner in which Schwartz describes the *MRR* mindset, the fanzine would quickly develop a reputation for extending comments pertaining to the 'legitimacy' of punk artistry on the basis of how closely an artistic work's methods of production and promotion corresponded with Yohannon's own strict expectations of punk rock norms. As MDC vocalist Dave Dictor recalls, *MRR* would gradually turn against that sizable contingent of hardcore artistic producers who, in spite of operating outside of the mainstream culture industry, nevertheless derived meagre profits from their releases and tours: "[MDC] made \$8,000 in ten gigs in a tour in 1986...and Tim started saying, 'Bands like MDC are selling out their roots.' He didn't relate to what it was like being in my shoes, trying to feed five or six people" (Boulware & Tudor, 2009: 202). Indeed, Yohannon's desire for strict control over the content of the *MRR* fanzine would eventually lead to the dissolution of the partnership with Bale:

Tim was not a person who believed in freedom of speech. I was. Elements in the punk scene were being excluded. So I started giving them a voice in my column. At a certain point Tim just said. "That's it. I'm not tolerating that kind of stuff, and you can't do that if you want to write for the magazine." So I said, "Fuck you. I'm not writing for any magazine that's gonna try to censor what I say." That was the end of that, pretty much. (Boulware & Tudor, 2009: 202)

As with Perry and the *Sniffin' Glue* fanzine, then, Yohannon and *MRR* operated with explicit intentions of shaping the San Francisco hardcore punk scene in a manner reflecting their own personal ideological interests, while reinforcing their position as legitimate subcultural

knowledge producers. However, whereas *Sniffin' Glue* would self-destruct following the publication of only a dozen issues, *MRR* remains an authoritative fixture of the San Francisco area scene to this day (even in spite of Yohannon's passing in 1998). While the first iteration of hardcore artists and fans might have criticized the magazine for attempting to shape the scene to promote Yohannon's personal political views, subsequent generations of *MRR* readers would prove less critical of the values and expectations of artistic conduct that were demanded by the fanzine. Yohannon and *MRR*'s influence can be substantiated through the legendary San Francisco punk club at 924 Gilman Street, which literally codified distinct expectations for musician and audience conduct as a prerequisite for admission. Meanwhile, factions within the Washington hardcore scene had, similarly, developed conflicting conventions for deducing 'legitimate' subcultural membership. As the following section will discuss, much of this conflict centered on the emergence of the so-called Washington 'Straight Edge' movement.

6.8: Straight Edge, Revolution Summer, and 'Emo-Core'

Straight edge was just a declaration for the right to live your life the way you want to. I was not interested in trying to tell people how to do that. I mean, obviously things got pretty crazily perverted over the years.

(Ian MacKaye, quoted in Kuhn, 2010: 34)

By the time Minor Threat released their sole full-length record, 1983's *Out Of Step*, the group had solidified their position as the most significant hardcore punk band operating in Washington DC. The group's significance can be calibrated in the emergence of 'straight edge', a

concept popularized by the 1981 Minor Threat songs “Straight Edge” and “Out Of Step (With The World).” As MacKaye notes, the pointed lyrics of the latter - "Don't smoke / don't drink / don't fuck / at least I can fucking think / can't keep up / out of step with the world" (Minor Threat, "Straight Edge;" *Out Of Step*, 1983; Dischord Records) - initially served two concurrent functions: promoting individuality and living in accordance with one's personal philosophies, and allowing MacKaye to speak to the frustrations of abstaining from alcohol, substance use and casual sex within a subcultural environment which seemed to nurture all three as signs of status and legitimate belonging. Though MacKaye espoused the virtues of operating with clarity of mind (especially in situations where self-defense may be necessary), the concept of straight edge would ultimately lead to the emergence of a contingent of 'hard line' advocates who violently reacted to the presence of 'bent edge' hardcore subculturalists. As MacKaye notes:

The whole idea of straight edge was incredibly maligned by a small amount of people [who referred] to Straight Edge as a movement [and] adopting rules or whatever...once [hardline straight edgers] started beating everybody up, a lot of kids were like 'this is stupid.'...so then they stopped being straight edge, whatever the fuck that means. (Kuhn, 2010: 39)

While MacKaye expresses discomfort recounting how he and Minor Threat 'accidentally' instigated a particularly violent sub-faction of hardcore subcultural participants, it is nevertheless crucial to recall that the 'hardline' straight-edge movement employed violence and intimidation in a symbolic economy that already accredited violence as a particularly desirable form of currency. MacKaye, himself, had played a significant part in accrediting such violence. As Blush contends, by the time Minor Threat decided to disband in 1983, "straight-edge [had] evolved into

a mean-spirited super strict form of morality in hardcore's temple of doom" (2001; 28). Given the presence of violent conflicts between straight-edge and non-straight-edge hardcore participants, between hardcore participants and the white supremacist factions which began to materialize *and* between hardcore participants and the wider society at large, it is not surprising that, as MacKaye notes, things had changed by 1984: "The elders in the DC punk scene began to drift away for various reasons, and the scene was left to these younger kids. There was a lot of senseless violence going on and it was really off putting" (Kuhn, 2010: 28). MacKaye also notes that "the whole violence thing just turned upon itself. People at shows would get into fights because somebody was wearing a wrong t-shirt or had long hair or just something really absurd like that. This made me realize what a completely pointless, unconstructive activity [violence] was but, by talking to these kids, *I also understood that they had been inspired by my violence*" (Kuhn, 2010: 32; my italics).

As longstanding Washington 'harDCore' participants became disillusioned with a scene that "seemed overrun with kids they didn't know, doing things they didn't like," and watched as the live concert environment "was constantly commandeered by younger punks with less interest in music than being seen" (Anderson & Jenkins, 2001: 162), MacKaye and a contingent of likeminded artists wanted to form a new bevy of musical groups tasked with "[creating] a scene within a scene" (Ibid.,:169). By late 1984, a number of groups (including MacKaye's Embrace, as well as such notable acts as Rites of Spring and Dag Nasty) had formed, in part, around the collective goal of challenging the hyper-masculinist conventions of the Washington scene. Crafting songs with lyrics on themes of self-introspection as opposed to aggression, these groups also saw themselves as a bona fide movement dubbed 'Revolution Summer.' Notes MacKaye:

Revolution Summer was to re-involve everybody and remove the parade of macho behavior. So by 1985, we became really politicized. At the beginning of our scene, we were very anti-political and in fact ridiculed people who were into politics. But for some reason in '85, art and politics suddenly made sense to us and we ran with it. Apartheid, women's issues, and the homeless were really galvanizing issues. (Blush, 2001: 157).

Half a decade after playing a large role in instigating a hyper-masculinized regional hardcore movement, MacKaye aspired to challenge the symbolic economy of the Washington hardcore scene. Beyond the decided lyrical shift employed by the Revolution Summer acts, attempts were made to attract wider audiences and promote different forms of crowd and artist interactions in the hardcore concert environment. Throughout the summer of 1985, these Revolution Summer acts would deter audience from engaging in aggressive practices; audiences also increasingly consisted of female spectators.

Suffice it to say, established members of the harDCore culture saw these emerging artistic conventions, and the new audiences they attracted, as a threat against the sanctity of the community as a whole. As the Revolution Summer popularized a new form of hardcore music, those amongst the 'old guard' devised a derogatory term - 'emo' or 'emo-core' - with which to pejoratively frame the movement and undermine its intentions. Though the term was initially instigated within the Washington hardcore community, MacKaye credits Tim Yohannon and the *MRR* fanzine for "[beating] it in to common usage" (Boulware & Tudor, 2009); a point which speaks both to the national influence which *MRR* had developed by 1985 and Yohannon's goal of extending his influence over the San Francisco punk scene to further corners of the country. In any event, 'emo-core' was a recurrent generic qualifier through which hardcore and punk

subculturalists would attempt to undercut the credibility of artists (and, eventually, audiences) perceived to be threatening the sanctity of established male-dominated subcultural conventions. Faced with a shifting crowd demographic and the emergence of live performances wherein old means through which to signal belonging were frowned upon and forbidden, the emergence of Revolution Summer contributed to the dissolution of the Washington harDCore scene.

6.9: '*Bedtime For Democracy*' and 924 Gilman Street

Hardcore formulas are dog shit / change and caring are what's real

Is this a state of mind / or just another label?

(The Dead Kennedys, "Chickenshit Conformist".

Bedtime For Democracy, 1986; Alternative Tentacles)

While MacKaye and Revolution Summer advocates strove to alter the subcultural conventions that they themselves were responsible for popularizing in Washington, Biafra, the Dead Kennedys and Alternative Tentacles were embroiled in a battle with the American judicial system. Facing indecency charges on the basis of having included a lithograph of the H. R. Geiger work 'Penis Landscape' within the liner notes of their 1985 album, *Frankenchrist*, the band opted to fight the charges in hopes of advocating for unfettered artistic freedom. Though the group was acquitted, the weight of the legal costs led to their dissolution. Before disbanding, however, the band would record the 1986 release *Bedtime For Democracy*, an album which contained a number of pointed criticisms directed at the hardcore punk subculture itself. As

Biafra would later note, this shift in lyrical focus challenged the codification of stringent 'hardcore punk' identities, which led to:

...the same kind of fundamentalist mindset that makes fundamentalist Christians so dangerous...you take one step out of line and they bite your head off. Young people who are curious about the politics spend 10 minutes with people like that and they decide they would rather be apathetic...a lot of vibrant minded activists either had nothing to do with punk by default or actively despised punk because their opinion of it had been tainted by fundamentalists and crusties. (Sinker, 2008: 32-33)

As such, *Bedtime For Democracy* contains a number of songs that challenged divisions between hardcore punk subcultural participants. Of these, the songs 'Do The Slag' (one of the rare DK songs penned by East Bay Ray as opposed to Biafra) and 'Chickenshit Conformist' are of particular note. Consider, first, these passages from 'Do The Slag':

Have you heard about the latest craze that's sweepin' across the nation?

All the punks from coast to coast have discovered an old invention

"Your hair's too long / Man, you're a queer / You're too New Wave / Put down that beer"

And do the slag, look at 'em run / Do the slag, hey you scum

Do the slag, ain't it fun? / Do the slag, let's all be dumb

Don't let those sissies on the floor / They're unhip, man, they bought the wrong clothes

Let's all do the latest craze / 'Cause having allies never pays

Slander their integrity / Doubt their humanity /

Talk about their haircuts / Are their politics correct?

(Dead Kennedys, "Do The Slag".

Bedtime For Democracy, 1986; Alternative Tentacles)

The song highlights the superficial grounds on which members of the American hardcore punk subculture justified the exclusion of emergent audience members: on the basis of their fashion sense, their affinities for populist musical forms (such as new wave) and their various political leanings were all fair game. Further, it calls the means through which established participants deterred the participation of new groups to attention by questioning their sexuality and physically attempting to prevent them from accessing the 'floor' (front stage) area. Though "Do The Slag" only touches upon the counterintuitive function of these practices in passing (the sarcastic observation that 'having allies never pays'), "Chickenshit Conformist" takes pains to render this theme explicit:

Punk's not dead it just deserves to die when it becomes another stale cartoon

A close-minded, self-centered social club / Ideas don't matter, Its who you know

If the music's gotten boring it's because of the people who want everyone to sound the same

Who drive the bright people out of our so-called scene 'till all that's left is a meaningless fad

Who needs a scene scared to love and to feel / Judeging everything by loud fast rules appeal?

(Dead Kennedys, "Chickenshit Conformist".

Bedtime For Democracy, 1986; Alternative Tentacles)

Biafra and the Dead Kennedys suggest that the entrenchment of hardcore punk conventions - in terms of artistic production and notions of legitimated hardcore tastes alike - had stifled creativity and popularized patterns of hardcore subcultural 'group-think.' In part, it would appear that Biafra takes particular issue with the strict guidelines whereby legitimated recognition as a hardcore punk artist depends upon abiding by expectations of musical form ('loud fast rules') as opposed to intellectual content (as 'ideas' matter less than the connections - which an artist has formed). Further lyrical excerpts from the song suggest that Biafra and the Dead Kennedys wanted to problematize how the hardcore punk scene had fractured under the duress of competing factions of subcultural participants:

Harder core than thou for a year or two / Then it's time to get a real job

Others stay home; it's no fun to go out when the gigs are wrecked by gangs and thugs

Walk tall, act small / only as tough as gang approval

Unity is bullshit when it's under someone's fat boot

Where's the common cause? Too many factions safely sulk in their shells

Agree with us on everything or we won't help with anything

That kind of attitude just makes a split grow wider

The more things change / the more they stay the same

We can't grow when we won't criticize ourselves

(Dead Kennedys, "Chickenshit Conformist".

Bedtime For Democracy, 1986; Alternative Tentacles)

Here, Biafra and the Dead Kennedys suggest that unthinking individuals became accustomed to demonstrating and reinforcing their claims to distinction by engaging in violent practices and abiding by narrow and exclusionary notions of hardcore punk orthodoxy. Of course, Biafra's claim that those with 'harder core than thou' identities will be subsumed into the mainstream labor market (thus rendering them "chickenshit conformists like [their] parents") suggests that the lack of growth inherent to the absence of subcultural self-critique well reinforces hegemony. An inability to consider critically divisive patterns within the subcultural field ensures an inability to reduce patterns of exploitation within the wider field of power.

The disbanding of the Dead Kennedys corresponds closely with the 1986 establishment of 924 Gilman Street, a Berkely-based punk venue that attracted widespread recognition as the early stomping ground of such notable acts as Operation Ivy, Green Day,²⁷ and Rancid. Formed initially by a collective of volunteers (which included Tim Yohannon of *MRR*), the Gilman Street venue appeared to follow the Dead Kennedys recommendations in adopting explicit policies meant to deter those possessed of racist, sexist and homophobic ideas, barring expressions of violence and the use of alcohol and drugs (Boulware & Tudor, 2009). However, the venue would come to nurture the very hardcore punk 'fundamentalism' Biafra rejected, barring performances by any artist who worked with the mainstream culture industry. Eventually, the Gilman Street venue and the Berkeley punk scene adopted increasingly strict rules associated with punk's status as a field of restricted artistic production, going so far as to

²⁷ Green Day's 1995 Warner/Reprise album, *Insomniac* contained a song, entitled "86" recounting vocalist Billie Joe Armstrong's experience of being shunned by the Gilman community following their considerable mainstream success: "What brings you around? / Did you lose something the last time you were here? / Exit out the back / And never show your head around again / Purchase your ticket / And quickly take the last train out of town / So stand aside and let the next one pass / Don't let the door kick you in the ass" (Green Day, "86". *Insomniac*, 1995; Reprise Records).

ban all forms of advertizing (Boulware & Tudor, 2009) and criticizing acts that - although abiding by D.I.Y. conventions - nevertheless achieved popularity with broader audiences. Even MacKaye's post-Embrace outfit, Fugazi, would be "denounced as 'rock stars' by some of the volunteers - even when the band played for free to raise funds for the financially strapped space" (2009: 324). This resulted in a punk subcultural community that appeared to support social egalitarianism among audiences through enforcing expectations of conduct while, at the same time, impressing strictly Frankfurtian expectations of proper conduct upon its artists.

Operation Ivy, renowned for having promoted communal unity and speaking out against the formation of internal punk factions, are also described as having disbanded on the basis of their growing profile. Achieving success within, and in spite of, a music community which punished popularity with reduced punk legitimacy, the group may have collapsed, in part, as a proactive means of protecting the legitimacy of their art in accordance with their own, locally-situated artistic *habitus*. The Gilman Street community contributed to a climate wherein acts - whatever their overarching artistic goals - so internalized conventions of punk artistic practice that achieving even modest success felt both alien and traitorous.

6.10: Riot Grrrl and the Spectre of Co-optation

Revolution doesn't have to be a real macho thing

(Kathleen Hanna, quoted in Anderson & Jenkins, 2001: 317)

While the American Hardcore movement died out during the mid-1980s, many of its hyper-masculine subcultural practices - including 'slam-dancing' and the 'circle pit' - persisted in

punk rock communities across North America. Many of the progenitors of American hardcore - and Ian MacKaye in particular - lamented the role they played in creating an unwelcoming environment for female artists and audience members; however, little concerted effort to resolve the inequitable gender relations plaguing the hardcore punk subculture emerged until the early 1990s with the 'Riot Grrrl' movement. While it is tempting to correlate Riot Grrrl's beginnings in the city of Olympia, Washington with a direct reaction to the hyper-masculinity of the Washington DC hardcore scene, it is important to note that Riot Grrrl was more broadly inspired by the ways rock music and other youth-directed forms of independent artistry had long denied equitable participation by female artists. The Riot Grrrl movement wished to demonstrate that female artists could challenge the rampant masculine bias in Western artistic production in a manner that might inspire listeners to analyze and contest the marginalized position of women within Western society. Bands such as Bikini Kill and Bratmobile launched a significant moment in North American punk rock by directly confronting the non-egalitarian nature of the field. While the Riot Grrrl philosophy would have a considerable effect in ensuring the promotion of feminist principles within youth cultural spaces, I draw particular attention toward the manner in which the mainstream American press sought to co-opt and commodify Riot Grrrl, thus reinvigorating old anxieties about the potential co-optation of punk rock itself.

The Riot Grrrl movement began through the efforts of Tobi Vail and Kathleen Hanna, two Olympia-based punk aficionados who established a fanzine - entitled *Riot Grrrl* - resisting the marginalized position of women in the punk and hardcore scenes. Taking inspiration from the "anti-capitalist feminism of African-American activist-writers bell hooks, Andre Lorde and Angela Davis" (Anderson & Jenkins, 2001: 310), and their experiences operating within a community wherein punk music "most commonly consisted of critiquing [...] major record labels

and mass culture [...yet frowned upon] making overtly political music" (Marcus, 2010: 78), the first issue of *Riot Grrrl* was published in July of 1991 as a free fanzine. As Anderson and Jenkins (2001) note:

Vail's feminist analysis of punk upset some of her fanzine readers, but she was unrepentant. She had spent a lot of time in 'male-dominated punk rock scenes', which she found prevented people from creating 'real alternative communities that are based in something other than consumption. "I feel completely left out of the realm of everything that is so important to me. And I know that this is partly because punk rock is for and by boys mostly and partly because punk rock of this generation is coming of age in a time of mindless career-goal bands". (2001: 308)

Following the publication of the third issue of *Riot Grrrl*, which included calls for "an all girl meeting to discuss the status of punk rock and revolution [...] ways to encourage higher female scene input and ways to help each other play instruments and get stuff done" (Anderson & Jenkins, 2001: 316), a number of female-directed punk and hardcore groups emerged including Bratmobile and Heavens To Betsy. The most influential group however, remains Vail and Hanna's own Bikini Kill. As Marcus (2010) notes, the band immediately established a reputation due to how lead vocalist Hanna, drawing upon her experiences as "a stripper who [was] also a feminist" (Hanna, 1994: Liner notes), used her stage mannerisms and performance to critique 'proper' femininity. Marcus recalls an instance where:

...wearing just a skirt and a scalloped black bra, Kathleen turned to face the audience so everyone could see what was written on her stomach: SLUT. She'd been doing this at shows in recent months, confronting audiences with what they might want to see (a topless woman) and what they might think of such a woman, all in one fell semiotic swoop (Marcus, 2010: 75).

Beyond challenging the masculinism of the punk and hardcore subcultural landscape, Bikini Kill laced their performances with symbolic dimensions that could be read in different ways by different sectors of the audience: While male attendees may be rendered uncomfortable by self-reflexively considering the moralistic and objectificatory undertones of the 'male gaze', female attendees might be inspired by Hanna's appropriation of the derogatory term 'slut,' undermining its regulatory abilities by brandishing it as a sign of self-empowerment.

Bikini Kill's debut, recorded by Ian MacKaye and released on cassette as *Revolution Girl Style Now!*, was released in 1991. Of the eight songs included, 'Double Dare Ya' best encapsulates the spirit of the Riot Grrrl philosophy. Opening with the line "We're Bikini Kill and we want revolution girl-style now!," the song inspires its listeners to live for their own interests as opposed to hegemonic gender expectations:

Hey girlfriend / I got a proposition / Goes something like this:

Dare ya to do what you want / Dare ya to be who you will / Dare ya to cry right out loud

'Don't you talk out of line' / 'Don't go speaking out of your turn' /

Gotta listen to what the Man says / Time to make his stomach burn

Burn, burn, burn, burn!

You're a big girl now / You've got no reason not to fight
You've got to know what they are / before you can stand up for your rights
Rights, rights? / You DO have rights

(Bikini Kill, "Double Dare Ya"

Revolution Girl Style Now!, 1991; Self-released)

Beyond addressing the myriad ways that patriarchal expectations restrict and regulate the lives of women, Hanna openly challenges her listeners to resist traditional femininity in ways that reflect Butler and Connell's popularization of new expressions of femininity. Just as much of Bikini Kill's catalogue advocates that women be granted cultural space, their live performances would instigate demands for literal space within the hyper-masculinized landscape of the concert floor. Ironically, criticisms meant to "denounce [Riot Grrrl] as 'separatist' because it didn't allow men to join" (Anderson & Jenkins, 2001: 33) immediately emerged²⁸ - the initial Riot Grrrl movement has helped to foster continuous discourse concerning the status of gender relations within the fields of punk, hardcore, and independent music production in general.

As the Riot Grrrl philosophy became popular within underground artistic circles, it would attract the attention of the mainstream music press and media. This interest would lead to a great amount of coverage from media sources ranging from mainstream news (*USA Today*) to niche-media catering to - and actively constructing - 'youth' and 'teenage' consumers (*Seventeen Magazine*). Despite the considerable chasm between these journalistic forms, each succeeded in undermining the feminist dimensions of the movement by reframing Riot Grrrl as a cutting-edge

²⁸ a perspective which would be articulated, notably, by the San Francisco punk act NOFX by way of the 1997 song "Kill Rock Stars" from the album *...So Long, And Thanks For All The Shoes*.

trend in adolescent female fashion. Anderson and Jenkins concede that "the [*USA today*] article did reveal Riot Grrrl's existence to a new audience...but the account of the movement was almost unrecognizable to those who had started it (2001: 343). Moore (2007) shows how *Seventeen* magazine offered an aestheticized response claiming, for example, that "riot grrrls don't shave and deliberately give each other bad haircuts" (Moore, 2007:9). These maligned representations of Riot Grrrl - and the derogatory manner in which members of Bikini Kill were characterized following their decision to cease speaking on the topic with the mainstream press - forced the band to acknowledge these forms of mainstream co-optation. As Vail (1994) notes within the liner notes of *The C.D. Version of the First Two Records*,

We have been written about a lot by big magazines who have never talked to us or seen our shows. They write about us authoritatively, as if they understand us better than we understand our own ideas, tactics and significance. They largely miss the point of everything about us because they have no idea what our context is/has been. Their idea of punk rock is not based on anything they have ever experienced directly or even sought an understanding of by talking to those who have, yet they continue to write about it as if [the media's] stereotypical surface level view of it is all there is...we ask you to think about what you know about us and think about how you got that information, cuz in most cases it probably isn't too accurate...

Continued misrepresentation of Riot Grrrl led pioneers of the philosophy to distance themselves from a term which had come to signify superficial trends in adolescent fashion, a

familiar problem in the punk scene. As Hanna would later reflect, "the things that I was saying back then were very easily co-optable by capitalism and the mainstream media. They're very easily interpreted to mean 'its feminist to be really sexy for men.' That's not what I meant at all" (Sinker, 2008: 74). While the mainstream culture industry did not advance the 'final word' on the Riot Grrrl movement, this attempt at appropriation nevertheless situates the anxieties that the punk culture would experience as entertainment journalists predicted punk to be 'the next big thing' shortly thereafter. It is also important to note that 'Riot Grrrl' was not the only youth cultural 'buzzword' to gain mainstream media currency throughout the early 1990s. Though popularized under the banner of the generic signifier 'grunge' - a term coined to frame a disparate collection of punk, metal and hard rock acts that all hailed from Seattle - the punk group Nirvana stoked subcultural fears of co-optation with the release of their 1991 album *Nevermind*. Reflecting on the immediate repercussions of Nirvana's mainstream profile, Anderson and Jenkins suggest that "the unexpected ascent of 'Smells Like Teen Spirit' [transformed punk] from a contentious outsider into another pop trend" (2001: 340) and, in doing so, rendered punk "an accepted, even fashionable part of the landscape" (Ibid., 375). As I demonstrate shortly, anxieties stoked by the parallel misappropriation of the Riot Grrrl concept and Nirvana's success became far more pronounced throughout the mid-1990s - and not necessarily without cause.

6.11) Concluding Thoughts

Having considered the genesis and decline of American hardcore punk, I wish to briefly reiterate some crucial observations regarding hardcore punk's hand in shaping the lineage of the punk rock artistic form. As compared to the aspiring underclass intellectuals constituting the

'year zero' English punk artist, American hardcore artists made no bones about establishing scenes which were often highly restrictive by design and rendered patriarchal through the currency affixed to expressions of complicit protest masculinity. While external factors including the hostile attentions of law enforcement officials and the parent culture doubtlessly influenced hyper-masculine forms of hardcore 'position-taking' when encountering *outsiders*, these variables do little to explain why displays of aggression became entrenched as a means of signifying one's authority over (and status within) respective hardcore punk scenes. This observation confirms Connell's concept of the protest masculine persona, and serves as a spectacular demonstration of the linkages between class underprivilege, social disempowerment and the sanctification of identities based around strength and 'dangerousness.' Ian MacKaye and his Teen Idles associates, initially resigned to the margins of the Washington hardcore scene on the basis of age and perceived socio-economic status, eventually sustained and reinforced their authority as the 'guiding lights' of the HarDCore community through the assertion of hypermasculinist identities. The corresponding process through which 'hardcore' status was accumulated through given rites of masculine gender performance rendered expressions of protest masculinity hegemonic within a subcultural context.

While MacKaye, Minor Threat, and the wider Washington harDCore scene sanctified aggression and machismo as markers of status, the Dead Kennedys used their artistry to openly condemn and criticize such practices. The philosophy underlying the Dead Kennedy's artistry throughout the 1980s suggests that the band sought to fulfill a role as authoritative punk subcultural knowledge producers, albeit with clear intentions to promote critical thought and deter the emergence of 'punk fundamentalism.' Given the emergent authority and stringent political leanings of the *Maximum Rocknroll* fanzine, however, 'punk fundamentalism'

nevertheless took root, a fact which the Dead Kennedys would lament at various points throughout their swan song release, *Bedtime For Democracy*. Above all else, *Bedtime For Democracy* condemned the manner in which notions of punk aristocracy and individualistic quests for status undermined the counter-hegemonic potential of the punk art form. When San Francisco's hardcore community did undertake initiatives, albeit on a small scale, to codify progress-minded communal expectations with the establishment of the 924 Berkeley Street venue, banning hyper-aggressive concert goers became a secondary objective to that of resisting co-optation. Ironically, then, and perhaps more than in any other region, the San Francisco punk rock culture became more affiliated with the very type of fundamentalism which the Dead Kennedys critiqued. Similarly, the case study of the manner in which Washington's 'Revolution Summer' attracted the scorn of the established hardcore vanguard illustrates that the very architects of a symbolic economy might experience considerable difficulty in attempting to alter or challenge the legitimacy of those conventions they helped to establish.

The Riot Grrrl movement also tested the counter-hegemonic potential of the punk rock musical form and the hyper-masculinized nature of widely established punk subcultural conventions. While mass-mediated misrepresentations of the Riot Grrrl movement initially undermined its intentions on a broader social scale, Riot Grrrl popularized a line of self-reflexive subcultural critique of the marginalized position of female artists and audience members throughout the collective North American hardcore scene and beyond that continues to influence feminist artists and academics to the present day. Reframing resistant women as an emergent consumer market had considerable repercussions as 'punk rock' itself became a target of culture industrial co-optation. The following chapter begins with an analysis of the process through which different punk rock producers would react to mainstream efforts to colonize the punk

subcultural field, and how these perspectives, in turn, came to be challenged following the terrorist attacks of September 11th, 2001 and the ominous passage of the *Patriot Act*.

Before moving forward, it is worthwhile to consider how the hardcore punk artists detailed here would react to the culture industries' increasing interest in punk rock throughout the 1990s. Following the dissolution of Black Flag, Henry Rollins would be the first hardcore luminary to attract the scorn of punk music aficionados. Beyond the fact that Rollins' subsequent group, The Rollins Band, would go on to achieve a level of mainstream success, the vocalist would also embark upon an acting career, appearing in such mainstream films as Michael Mann's *Heat* and, to far less critical acclaim, the Charlie Sheen comedy *The Chase*. The decade to follow would also find the legacy of the Dead Kennedys tarnished, as the remainder of the group would take Jello Biafra to court on the basis of a dispute over royalties and, subsequently, succeed in having the publishing rights to the Dead Kennedys material revoked from the former vocalist. While Biafra has subsequently focused on releasing spoken word albums, and a number of musical ventures (most recently, the band Jello Biafra and the Guantanamo School of Medicine), the remainder of the band would continue to tour as the Dead Kennedys with an alternative vocalist. In many respects, MacKaye's Fugazi would prove to best abide by the artistic conventions popularized by the American hardcore punk movement. Up until their dissolution in 2002, Fugazi would take great care to ensure that each and every one of their concerts would be all-ages, charge no more than five dollars admission, and refuse to partake in band merchandizing. Ironically, then, the former hardcore punk musicians who would best uphold principles of restricted production throughout the 1990s would do so within the context of a group having emerged to challenge and critique hardcore punk orthodoxy itself.

Chapter Seven. Rock Against Bush (and/or) For Sustainable Capitalism: 1990s 'Neo-Punk', the War on Terror and the Punkvoter Movement.

7.1) Introduction

By the dawn of the early 1990s, punk rock had undergone a number of notable permutations as a musical form. Whereas early American acts such as The Ramones, The Stooges and the New York Dolls celebrated teen culture and despondency, punk's migration to the social context of late 1970s England inspired a more politicized form of youth-tailored cultural expression. When the influence of punk rock migrated back to North American shores, it accredited expressions of hyper-masculinism and violence to validate claims to individual distinction within the hardcore punk community. However, as the artistic founders of American Hardcore took issue with the limited culture they themselves had nourished, the American Hardcore movement was declared 'dead' by 1986. The end of the American Hardcore movement inaugurated a brief but significant era during which young artistic producers once again refused the logics and expectations of the mainstream culture industry, striving to serve as its antithesis.

The decline of the hardcore punk movement corresponds closely with the establishment of the MTV music video station channel and, subsequently, the onset of new means through which to market entertainment products and emergent forms of nonconformist 'lifestyle' options to Western youth populations. Their problematic approach to issues of collective ideology aside, the post-subcultural perspectives which became popular throughout this period are nonetheless correct in noting a proliferation of potential 'youth identities'. While the construction of 'grunge' or 'alternative rock' initially served as the bedrock upon which to codify the notion of a

culturally unique ‘Generation X’ throughout the early 1990s, the exhaustion of this pseudo-movement (or, the well-recognized notion that ‘the next big thing’ had come and passed) coincides with emergent ‘niche-media’ which catered not to ‘youth culture’ as a whole, but select populations therein. This means that, as select contingents of the youth-directed culture industry attempted to popularize ‘punk’ as the next big movement, others attempted to do the same with the musical forms of Hip-Hop and Gangsta Rap, a variety of permutations in electronic music, and emergent musical forms such as the rock/rap music hybrid ‘Nu Metal’. Further, the manner in which many of the artists affiliated with these movements did ‘play’ with a bricolage of aesthetic tendencies which were once used to differentiate between youth cultural populations (consider, here, the particularly salient example of the popular techno-group The Prodigy, and the manner in which the group pulled heavily from the aesthetics of the Year Zero English punk movement). This all serves to stress that, while facets of mainstream culture industry would indeed attempt to render punk ‘the next big youth movement,’ punk was simply one among a plethora of musical forms on offer as mediated ‘taste-makers’ flung emergent youth cultural forms upon the ‘cultural radar’ of niche markets in desperate hopes that something might ‘stick.’

The most prevalent narratives surrounding the state of punk rock throughout the 1990s circulated fears that the mainstream culture industry had finally succeeded in rendering punk a politically ineffectual commodity. Whereas the punk music of the 1980s was brash, often poorly produced, and catered to restricted, primarily masculine subcultural audiences, the punk rock bands who now sought to continue on throughout the 1990s were significantly more melodic, released records of far improved production value, and appeared to harbor few qualms about being well received by mainstream audiences (in most cases). Meanwhile, there is no reason to

doubt that the proliferation of youth consumer goods also popularized ‘post-subcultural’ methods of endorsing temporal and fluid expressions of identity among youth. Many of the acts discussed throughout this chapter correlate the decline of the artform not only with the overtures of the mainstream, but the subcultural ‘tourists’ that movements to co-optation would ensure. Punk artists of the 1990s would reinvigorate ideological debates, albeit oftentimes in line with initiatives to castigate the ‘pretenders’ among their ranks. The conduct endorsed by the restricted artists discussed below, though couched in discourse surrounding mainstream co-optation, just as well read as a response to the fluid and superficial means in which youth were directed to engage with their identities.

Following the lead of acts like the Dead Kennedys, many bands of the era wrote lyrics that spoke self-reflexively about the overarching purpose of punk rock music and contributed to debates regarding “sanctified” modes of punk rock production. Unlike the authoritative punk and hardcore acts of previous eras, however, the music of a notable contingent of punk rock acts attracted mainstream media accreditation as the ‘next big thing’ in mainstream youth musical tastes and, as a result, the fandom of ‘large-scale’ audiences. These factors reveal that prominent 1990s punk acts are in many respects unique when compared with bands of previous eras. Increasing mainstream interest in punk ensured that prominent ‘neo-punk’ acts enjoyed increased artistic longevity²⁹ and economic success, thus disturbing the tradition of assessing punk authenticity based on whether one’s artistry benefitted their socio-economic position. Though a handful of 1990s punk acts would go on to achieve considerable mainstream prominence, many of a lesser profile enjoyed a level of economic success which, though modest, would have been read as acts of artistic heresy in the 1980s. Thus, artistic conventions discrediting punk

²⁹ Each of the acts featured heavily throughout this chapter are still intact and performing as of December 2015.

legitimacy on grounds of increased commercial success or profile became untenable due to the populism of the artistic form. This, in turn, led to the re-popularization of discourses equating artistic 'authenticity' with competing forms of punk artistic ideology. However, rather than being resigned to the pages of little-known fanzine or spoken through the performative aspects of punk subcultural participation, the artists of this era primarily made their artistic-ideological positions known through the content of their lyrics. Thus, 1990s 'neo-punk' would attempt to codify definitive, yet at times paradoxical ideologies for authenticating punk rock artistic practice against the context of active efforts to co-opt the movement on the part of mainstream culture industries. Los Angeles-based group Bad Religion, San Francisco's NOFX and Winnipeg's Propagandhi exemplify the 'logics' informing their artistic production strategies and philosophies.

This tradition of punk artistic discourse would take on a decidedly different tone following the onset of Western society's so-called 'War on Terror.' The attacks against the World Trade Center and Pentagon on September 11th, 2001, and the extreme reactions of the George W. Bush administration (including passage of the 2001 *Patriot Act*) contributed to circumstances which inspired many punk artists to modify aspects of their artistic practice and philosophy. For example, NOFX vocalist and Fat Wreck Chords owner "Fat Mike" Burkett, once a staunch supporter of restricted trends in punk artistic production, argued that 'keeping punk rock elite' (in his own words) took secondary import to moving the band's fanbase to become involved in mainstream political systems. This field-positional shift led the outspoken activist punk rock act Propagandhi, former purveyors of Gramscian trends in punk ideology, to take on a revised perspective which privileged the Frankfurt ideological position in claiming that Burkett had become an 'inauthentic' subcultural producer (and thus a threat to the sanctity of the

field of restricted punk production). Finally, as web-based technologies began to challenge the logic underpinning traditional Frankfurtian perspectives on the capacities of the modern-day culture industry, I argue that punk artistic narratives based on the theory of mainstream co-optation would persist, primarily, as a function of the Bourdieuan dynamics underlying the processes of accrediting status and determining individual legitimacy within the subcultural field.

7.2) 1987-1993: The Rise of 'Neo-Punk'

While the ideology and musical form promoted by the American Hardcore movement was preferred in East Coast urban centers such as New York and Boston, new musical terrains would be explored in other regions including Washington , D.C. and the American West Coast. Punk musicians throughout the Washington area experimented with the post-punk³⁰ leanings as championed by the likes of Fugazi, American West Coast punk rock acts nurtured the emergence of two distinct, yet complementary, traditions in punk rock artistry as the 1990s approached. Thanks, in large part, to the 1987 establishment of the Lookout! Records imprint, the city of San Francisco would become closely affiliated with 'pop-punk.' Popularized by such bands as Screeching Weasel, The Queers, Pansy Division and the Mr. T. Experience, San Francisco pop-punk revisited youth cultural themes engaged by the Dictators and the Ramones, offering situated accounts of the contemporary adolescent experience, the highs and pitfalls of romance, and 'teenage' popular cultural goods. In spite of a renewed attention to melody, Lookout!

³⁰ Briefly, post-punk is perhaps most succinctly defined by Reynolds (2005: 1) as a movement whereby a range of bands “dedicated themselves to fulfilling punk’s uncompleted musical revolution, exploring new possibilities by embracing electronics, noise, jazz and the classical avant-garde, and the production techniques of dub reggae and disco”. Bands frequently cited as influential include Joy Division, Talking Heads and John Lydon’s post-Pistols act, Public Image Ltd (PiL).

Records' limited distribution network and low-fidelity recording methods ensured that pop-punk remained a highly regionalized musical movement in the restricted punk rock artistic tradition. Though far less caustic than hardcore punk rock, the San Francisco pop-punk movement made little attempt to serve audiences outside of the Gilman faithful and, in this sense, declined mainstream audience tastes. Notably, Lookout! Record artists nurtured the 1987 formation of Green Day, a Bay-area pop-punk trio that spent the latter portion of the 1980s developing a modest local following within the San Francisco punk community. After their debut record in 1990, the group's sophomore album, 1992's *Kerplunk!*, would earn the band an increasingly heightened profile within the San Franciscan punk rock field.

The late 1980s and early 1990s would also play host to the emergence of 'skate punk', which combined the fast-paced tempo of traditional hardcore with heavy doses of melody and, eventually, a technical musicianship reminiscent of thrash metal. By many accounts, this generic shift correlates with the reunion of the Los Angeles hardcore punk act Bad Religion and the release of their 1988 album *Suffer*. Having disbanded in the mid-1980s on the basis of two concurrent factors - the fact that the Los Angeles hardcore scene had broken into violent factions, but also the overwhelmingly negative reaction to Bad Religion's experimental and 'progressive' second EP, 1983's *Into The Unknown* - a number of variables would appear to have contributed to the group's reformation. First, the dissolution of the Los Angeles hardcore scene enabled the possibility of a new punk artistic traditions - and, by extension, a new punk culture - which might avoid the pitfalls that befell the movement of the early 1980s. Second, Bad Religion guitarist Brett Gurewitz had established the independent Epitaph Records label imprint, and invested in construction of the Westbeach recording studio which, though catering to small-scale punk rock acts, risked heresy in brandishing cutting edge recording and production technologies. As Bad

Religion vocalist Greg Graffin recalls, much of the impetus for reforming the band arose from the quality of these newfound recording capacities: "I couldn't believe what I heard coming through my headphones. The clarity of the instruments, the separation and space created by the stereo imaging, and finally the crispness of my own voice were unlike anything that I had ever heard before" (Graffin & Olson, 2010: 192).

The availability of improved recording technologies would inspire Graffin to modify his vocal performance to optimize clarity of the band's messages. "I was on a new journey - graduate school - and I found that delving into areas of philosophical inquiry and intellectual challenge greatly enhanced the conceptual quality of my song writing. I wanted my newly discovered concepts and words to be audible, so I took great pains to be more eloquent and articulate when I sang" (Ibid., 2010: 198). As with the gross majority of the band's early (and, for that matter, entire) catalogue, *Suffer*'s lyrical themes revolve around a consideration of the dangers inherent in uncritically accepting and abiding by received authority (coercive or ideological), introspective questions debating the inherent nature of human beings, and the dangers of unfettered technological progress.³¹ Bad Religion, thus, became purveyors of a Gramscian punk rock ideology through both the content of their messages, and their wish to inspire listeners to further their own educations through lyrical sophistication. Given the record's production value, the clarity of Graffin's vocal performance, and the heady, intellectual quality of the band's highly critical lyrics, *Suffer* would prove to have an immediate, indelible impact on the direction of punk rock artistry. As Gurewitz's Epitaph Records began to sign more

³¹ Consider this excerpt from *Suffer*'s "1,000 More Fools": "I heard them say that the meek shall reign on earth / Phantasmal myriads of sane bucolic birth / I've seen the rapture in a starving baby's eyes / Inchoate beatitude, the Lord of the Flies / So what does it mean when your mind starts to stray? / Kaleidoscoping images of love on the way / Brother you'd better get down on your knees and pray / 1,000 more fools are being born every fucking day" (Bad Religion, "1,000 More Fools". *Suffer*, 1988; Epitaph Records).

West Coast area punk rock acts, many of whom utilized the Westbeach Recording studios, the clarity of production quality which the *Suffer* album offered set the standard for the Epitaph label's subsequent artists.

7.2.1) *The Epitaph Records Roster*

While punk attracted the attention of mainstream audiences throughout the early to mid 1990s, two of Epitaph Records earliest signings popularized narratives that influenced standards of 'authentic' punk rock throughout the remainder of the decade. The Los Angeles-based NOFX, founded in 1983 by Fat Mike Burkett, spent their earliest years melding melody with complex and extensive guitar leads. From a lyrical standpoint, NOFX initially appeared to continue in the tradition of such acts as The Vandals and The Descendents, engaging highly irreverent, purposefully juvenile themes. For example, the group's debut album, 1988's *Liberal Animation*, contained a number of songs explicitly designed to offend those involved in the veganism and animal rights movements.³² Their fourth full length album, 1992's *White Trash, Two Heebs and a Bean*, established the band's status as one of skate-punk's more prominent acts. A newfound lyrical maturity emerged with the release of their fifth and most commercially successful album, 1994's *Punk in Drublic*.³³

³² Consider this excerpt from *Liberal Animation's* "Shut Up Already": " 'Affection not dissection / Meat is murder / Animals are for petting' / Oh shut the fuck up already. I'm tired of you whining about poor little animals dying and the food they are supplying / If a big animal had the chance / It wouldn't take another glance / It would eat you up" (NOFX, "Shut Up Already". *Liberal Animation*, 1988; Epitaph Records).

³³ Briefly, it is worth considering this records inclusion of the song "Don't Call Me White," which speaks to trends in reverse racial discrimination in a manner similar to Minor Threat's "Guilty of Being White," but in a much less antagonistic manner Consider: "The connotations wearing my nerves thin / Could it be semantics generating the mess we're in? I understand that language breeds stereotype / But what's the explanation for the malice, for the spite? / So go ahead and label me an asshole cause I can accept responsibility, for what I've done, but not for who I am / Don't call me white" (NOFX, Don't Call Me White". *Punk In Drublic*, 1994; Epitaph Records).

A second, important early Epitaph Records signing was the band Rancid. Formed in 1993 by ex-Operation Ivy members Tim Armstrong and Matt Freeman, the group - initially a three-piece before expanding to include vocalist/guitarist Lars Frederiksen - released a self-titled album of particularly caustic punk rock on the Epitaph label in 1993. Compared to the majority of acts signed to the Epitaph records imprint, Rancid proved to be unique in two respects. First, the lyrical content of their debut album primarily recounted Armstrong's struggles with alcoholism and homelessness (as well as the stories of those he encountered as a member of Berkeley, California's impoverished underclass), exposing the harsh realities inherent to impoverished, out-of-doors living. Second, not unlike Epitaph's Total Chaos, the members of Rancid appropriated and revised the sensationalistic aesthetics popular throughout the first and second waves of English punk rock. With the group's second album, 1994's *Let's Go*, Rancid reinforced their position as a reservoir for 'situated' celebrations of underclass culture and first-hand accounts of the perils of impoverished living while, and in the spirit of the Clash, gravitating towards a slightly more accessible punk rock musical form. Two notable tracks from this album include "Salvation" and "Sidekick," the former recounting the deprivation Armstrong experienced when assisting the Salvation Army in picking up donations from higher-class neighborhoods, the latter a fantasy about a vigilante who might assail government authorities in revenge for their predation of the underclass, respectively.³⁴

³⁴ From Salvation "There's a neighborhood called Blackhawk where all the rich people hide / I was down on my luck working for the salvation army / The shelter is where I reside / Every day we drive into Blackhawk and we pick up the offerings / Microwave, refrigerator for the suffering / I can't believe these people live like kings / Hidden estates and diamond rings / I'm a rat out on a mission / I'm in your front yard under suspicion" (Rancid, "Salvation". *Let's Go*, 1994; Epitaph Records). From Sidekick: "Down in Oakland off of west grand / St. Joseph relief program / A good place were good people get food / help your fellow man, a good thing to do / Government agency said 'be afraid of me, I'll shut your doors down, it won't phase me / Wolverine came through, left the agent for dead / Opened up the doors back up, everyone was fed" (Rancid, "Side Kick". *Let's Go*, 1994; Epitaph Records).

Throughout the 1990s, Bad Religion, NOFX and Rancid had significant impact on new adherents exposed to the musical form by virtue of punk rock's increasing mainstream profile. While Green Day and The Offspring would sell the greatest number of records, it is this initial trio of bands who used their expanding mainstream profile to interrogate the 'purpose' of punk throughout the remainder of the decade. These three groups became purveyors of large-scale production by sheer virtue of their notable mainstream profile.

7.3) Toward a Sub-field of Restricted Production: Fat Wreck Chords and Propagandhi

This record is dedicated to anyone, anywhere, who's trying, in any way,
to make this crummy world a better place for everyone.

Fuck the rest of you.

(Propagandhi, Liner Notes.

Less Talk More Rock, 1996; Fat Wreck Chords)

1993 was also the year in which NOFX's Mike Burkett founded his own independent punk label, San Francisco-based Fat Wreck Chords. Though focusing primarily on prominent skate punk acts arising along the American West Coast (including the likes of Lagwagon and Strung Out), the label also represented artists whose music addressed political and social issues, such as the Santa Cruz punk group Good Riddance and the Winnipeg, Manitoba three-piece Propagandhi. While Bad Religion, Rancid and NOFX were adopted by large-scale audiences, the stable of Fat Wreck Chords chose the principles of restricted artistic production (even though

many would enjoy considerable popularity). Throughout the decade, the majority of Fat Wreck Chords' artists endorsed practices of restricted artistic production, despite a pronounced mainstream interest in discovering and 'accrediting' further punk rock acts, by refusing to release promotional videos.

Though founded in 1986, Propagandhi - then consisting of guitarist/vocalist Chris Hannah, bassist/vocalist John K. Samson and drummer Jord Samoleski - would not release their debut album, *How To Clean Everything*, until 1994. Regardless, the band's highly politicized, outspoken, and sophisticated (if gleefully profanity-laced) lyrical content render Propagandhi a band of particular note. The opening song on their debut album, "Anti-Manifesto," wasted little time in conveying their perspective on the nature of contemporary punk rock music and their self-professed position within it:

Dance and laugh and play. Ignore the message we convey. It seems we're only here to entertain.

A rebellion cut-to-fit. Well I refuse to be the soundtrack to it. While we entertain we're still knee-deep in shit. There's something wrong inside. We've played it safe, enjoyed the ride.

You won't like this but I have something to confide:

We strive for something more than a faded sticker on a skateboard.

Now we've rained on your parade and we're out the door.

And I don't even care any fucking more.

(Propagandhi, "Anti-Manifesto")

How To Clean Everything, 1994; Fat Wreck Chords)

Members of Propagandhi approached the punk musical form of the early 1990s as both politically ineffectual, and catering to an audience base which sought entertainment at the expense of enlightenment. Further, in promising to 'rain on the parade' of their assumed politically disinterested listenership, the group seemed to position themselves as the antithesis to trends in politically ineffectual punk rock artistry. The remainder of the *How To Clean Everything* album asked listeners to question mainstream Western society and its institutions, targeting nationalism ("Stick the Fucking Flag Up Your Goddam Ass, You Sonofabitch"), religion ("Haillie Sellasse, Up Your Ass") and traditional gender relations ("Fuck Machine," "Who Will Help Me Bake This Bread?"), in particular. The group used the record's liner notes to reinforce their artistic objectives and philosophies:

Propagandhi, as a group of individuals, share a very basic commitment to virtues that reflect fundamental aspects of anarchist thought. However, as a direct result of the fact that we are a group of distinct, free-thinking individuals, Propagandhi does not represent any singular, narrow subculture of 'leftist' thought. Our individual aspirations/expectations, perceptions and/or cynicisms, regarding the feasibility and durability of a practical application of anarchist theory, have been demonstrated, through internal discussion(s), to contrast widely. That's because anarchy ain't dogma. Anarchy ain't homogeneity. And Propagandhi ain't neither. We are, however, good kissers. (*How To Clean Everything* [liner notes]; 1994)

The release of *How to Clean Everything* also marks the beginning of a somewhat playful relationship between NOFX and Propagandhi. Hannah would instigate a pattern of artistic call-

and-response with Burkett through *How To Clean Everything's* liner notes³⁵ and, simultaneously, the release of their Fat Wreck Chords 7," *How To Clean A Couple O' Things*. In lieu of developing unique cover iconography for the single, the band would instead issue a defaced version of the cover iconography from NOFX's earlier single, *The PMRC Can Suck On This*. NOFX, in kind, would deface the cover art of Propagandhi's *How To Clean A Couple O' Things* when they released their 7" album *Fuck The Kids* in 1996.

In lieu of advocating for any rigidly defined form of Anarchism, then, Propagandhi disseminated music to instigate critical thought and social critique. Their second album, the 1996 record *Less Talk, More Rock* carried its banner as an "Animal Friendly Anti-Fascist Gay Positive Pro-Feminist" group, advocating critical social introspection and the critique of punk culture itself. Beyond featuring songs meant to problematize trickle-down economics ("Rio De San Atlanta, Manitoba"), the relations between state power and industrial interests ("...And We Thought That Nation States Were A Bad Idea"), and culturally sanctioned sexism and homophobia ("Less talk, More Rock," "Refusing To Be A Man"), the *Less Talk, More Rock* record featured a number of short writings that questioned nationalist ideologies ("Countries are Dumb"), engaged in religious skepticism ("Religion? No, Thanks"), and promoted Feminist, Animal Rights, and sexual egalitarianism movements ("Uppity Women Unite!", "Animals Are Not Biological Machines", and "Silence = Death", respectively). Besides a substantial list of recommended cultural goods from activist organizations, bands, and leftist intellectuals, the band included the following note:

³⁵ Speaking to the particular cover art of the record, Hannah writes that, "So, as I'm writing this, we're like 3 months late in getting the cover and shit done and Fat Mike is probably wishing he'd never met us. Apparently we have to send him the cover today (April 3rd), or else he'll probably do the cover and call it "Meat: It Just Makes Sense!" with a picture of Donnel Cameron [the record's engineer] reading a Hustler on it (*How To Clean Everything* liner notes, 1993).

Hey, I know some of the ideas on this record might seem overwhelming, intimidating or just downright confusing if you've never really been exposed to them before, but don't worry about it. Fuck, I know that when I was first introduced to radical ideas and social justice issues, I just didn't get it...and it seemed like too much work to figure it all out anyways. But as scared, reactionary and lazy as I was (and still am), the idea of a world where there's not as much suffering made me want to figure it out. I just had one problem: I had no fucking clue where to start. But you, my little revolutionary cupcake, don't have to endure the same level of ignorance that I did! If you're at all interested or even just a wee bit curious about ideas or perspectives that we'll never learn about in our schools or on that other great source of utter shit and stupidity, (M)TV, here's a fucking awesome starting point...don't get discouraged- sometimes people who have been dealing with this kind of crap for years tend to speak and write in smarty-pants college language ...[but] keep at it and when you figure something out, try to translate it into language dumb-asses like the rest of us can understand! Spread the friggin' word! To the barricades! (Liner notes, *Less Talk, More Rock* [italics in original], 1996).

Given the extent to which *Less Talk, More Rock* attempts to serve social justice themes, it is arguable that Propagandhi followed Gramscian principles in terms of the ideological purpose and goals of their artistic output. By crafting songs as sources of alternative knowledge and perspectives, while offering pointers on how to further locate and best approach a range of secondary resources, the band's sought to educate and mobilize listeners as opposed to minding punk's symbolic borders. As Samolesky recalls,

There was a shift happening [in 1996] and we're noticing that a lot of the crowd is maybe a little bit newer to that kind of scene, maybe conservative, or they just haven't been exposed to that kind of thing very much...Those are the people you want to connect with on that level. We thought we could merge activism with music in a more practical way, I guess. You kinda feel better at the end of the night when you see a young person walking down the street with this radical book and not just buying all the shag and how hokey that whole thing is" (Pratt, 2012: 6)

Propagandhi's socio-political stance, and the *Less Talk, More Rock* song "The Only Good Fascist Is A Very Dead Fascist" in particular, attracted the pronounced ire of white supremacist factions throughout North America and beyond. After an oversold concert in Denver dissolved into a violent conflict between police and attendees, Samson left the group to found The Weakerthans shortly after the release of *Less Talk, More Rock*. Though Todd Kowalski of the politically motivated Regina punk group I-Spy would fill his position shortly thereafter, the turnover in membership would put Propagandhi into hiatus during the remainder of the 1990s. This period of relative inactivity coincided with the establishment of G7 Welcoming Committee Records; an independent label that Hannah co-founded (allegedly by way of a loan advanced by Mike Burkett), primarily focused on releasing music from left-leaning political activist Canadian hardcore and punk bands, including Submission Hold, Malefaction, Che Chapter 127 and The Weakerthans. Structured to ensure economic parity between artist and label, and restricting participant acts on the basis of their political orientations, the G7 record label would fold in the mid-2000s shortly following its' decision to transform into a 'digital only' label.

Nevertheless, the bands' impetus to follow Burkett's suit in establishing their own independent record imprint further reinforces early alignments with Gramscian tendencies.

7.4) ...And Out Come The Wolves: Punk Goes 'Mainstream'

Throughout 1994, a number of punk rock acts would achieve considerable mainstream success. As the central bands of the Seattle 'grunge' movement either disbanded or purposefully released increasingly challenging, non-mainstream music,³⁶ record company executives sought out punk rock acts - including Bad Religion and Green Day - to capitalize on the modest success of their independent releases and move toward framing punk as the 'next big' youth marketable. In the case of Green Day, the modest yet notable success of their *Kerplunk!* record attracted the attentions of the Reprise record label (a subsidiary of Warner Music), leading to a contract which the band accepted despite the possibility that they would alienate their fan base (Boulware & Tudor, 2009).

While the 1994 release of Green Day's major label debut, *Dookie*, would draw modest attention to the band's first single, "Longview" (a none-too-subtle ode to teenage listlessness and masturbation), their mainstream popularity increased exponentially throughout the summer of 1994. Beyond a notable performance at the summer festival Woodstock '94 (during which the band gleefully engaged in an extended mud fight with the waterlogged crowd throughout the entirety of their set), Green Day's single and video for "Basket Case" made them the flagship band of the punk rock revivalist movement. A self-deprecating reflection on vocalist Billie-Joe Armstrong's self-perceived neuroticism, "Basket Case" spawned the release of a video - based in

³⁶ See Pearl Jam's *Vitalogy* and Nirvana's *In Utero* for examples.

equal parts on the classic film *One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest* and the Ramones' "I Wanna Be Sedated" video - so prevalently featured through MTV's video rotation as to be rendered inescapable. With the fourth single and third video from the *Dookie* album, the accessible, mid-tempo number "When I Come Around," Green Day achieved a startling level of international mainstream success with worldwide record sales in the neighborhood of ten million units (Diehl, 2007).

Bad Religion, on the other hand, signed with Atlantic Records, for the sake of reaching a wider audience than Gurewitz's Epitaph Records conceivably could, and immediately re-issued their most recent Epitaph Records release, *Recipe For Hate*, through the corporate label. Compared to Green Day, Bad Religion enjoyed modest, if unspectacular, mainstream success as a part of the Atlantic Records stable. Following the re-release of *Recipe For Hate*, the band increased their mainstream profile with the 1994 album *Stranger Than Fiction* (which included such notable tracks as "Infected" and a re-recording of the particularly popular song "21st Century Digital Boy"). This would prove to be the band's final 1990s era recording with Gurewitz, who had harbored reservations about the logic guiding their jump to Atlantic Records. Further, Gurewitz suddenly had cause to divert his full attentions to the Epitaph label as the second album from The Offspring, 1994's *Smash*, attracted considerable mainstream airplay. Unlike Green Day, whose mainstream success can be attributed to the promotional force of the Warner Brothers record label, the Offspring's unexpected success was precipitated by the influential Los Angeles radio station KROQ's affinity for the singles "Come Out And Play" and "Self Esteem," and MTV's decision to emphasize the videos with heavy rotation.

With two punk rock groups suddenly dominating both MTV video rotation schedules and the consciousness of the general record buying public, record labels and mainstream music

media set their sights toward laying claim over the discovery of the 'next' big punk rock act. On the strength of the formidable sales of their *Let's Go* album and considerable exposure on MTV of the video "Salvation," most predicted Rancid would be the next punk rock group to break into the mainstream. Prior to the 1995 release of their landmark album, ...*And Out Come The Wolves*, the press framed coverage of the band around a dissection of ambiguous punk rock ethics in artistic production. One of the band's earliest interviews with mainstream music publication, *Guitar World* magazine (Grad, 1995), consisted almost entirely of questions surrounding how the band might respond to accusations of having 'sold out', and whether punk rock's mainstream attention ran the risk of diluting punk's sociopolitical undertones. The band's responses to these questions suggested that the group harbored a general ambivalence concerning the restricted field of punk artistic production, yet orchestrated their responses to suggest their endorsement of a Gramscian ideological position. To quote Frederiksen,

Punk rock is about not having any rules. I say that over and over like a mantra [...punk rock] only gets diluted [by mainstream attention] if you let it. I think it's good that punk is getting media attention. A punk rocker telling another punk rocker that there should be a revolution is like going to a Catholic church and telling them that services are on Sunday.

It's preaching to the converted (Grad, 1995: 75-77).

In spite of the band's apparent willingness to act out against punk artistic orthodoxy by entering a period during which they strongly considered signing with a major label prior to the recording of their third album, Rancid opted to remain with Epitaph Records. Nevertheless, a preceeding and surprisingly well publicized dalliance with a number of potential major label suitors suggests that

the band were not opposed to infiltrating the mainstream, albeit on their own terms. They appeared on *Saturday Night Live* in November of 1995, were featured on the cover of *Spin Magazine*, and joined the Lollapalooza tour (alongside Metallica, Soundgarden, and The Ramones) the following summer. Though Gold's (1995) *Spin Magazine* emphasized the decision to stay with Epitaph Records out of a strong sense of loyalty and friendship with Brett Gurewitz, the article rehashes principles of the restricted artistic field. As Finnegan (2003) notes in analyzing a *Spin Magazine* article featuring Green Day from this same period, conventions of punk authenticity from punk eras past found revisitation and redistribution, somewhat ironically, on the basis of the contents of mainstream music press coverage. Though Rancid never came close to matching the commercial success of the likes of Green Day and the Offspring, their most renowned album, 1995's, *...And Out Come The Wolves*, reached platinum sales on the strength of singles such as "Time Bomb" and "Ruby Soho." Despite allegations that the album title was inspired by the flurry of major label attention the band encountered, Rancid reserved their perspectives on the mainstream music industry to their interview opportunities as opposed to their musical catalogue.³⁷

7.4.1) NOFX and the Philosophy of Restricted Artistic Production

³⁷ One possible exception is the song "Disorder and Disarray," which was grossly misinterpreted by the band's general fanbase. These lyrics warrant further attention, in part because of the frequency by which they were cited by irate fans following Rancid's decision to enter into a unique "distribution deal" with Epic records prior to the release of their 2003 album *Indestructible*. According to popular logic, the lyrics "Say goodbye when you see me sign / now I'm crucified / crucify me" (Rancid, "Disorder and Disarray". *...And Out Come The Wolves*, 1995; Epitaph Records) speak to the band's intentions of steadfastly refusing to participate with the mainstream culture industry. However, the preceding song verse ("Times are gonna change / change or step aside / it's my point of view that took you by surprise") suggests that Armstrong advocates taking advantage of punk's newfound media attention by penetrating the mainstream music. The chorus, then, outlines the negative reaction anticipated should the band act against punk artistic orthodoxy, i.e. crucifixion, even though Armstrong's was oblivious to outside observers who might question his artistic credibility.

Whereas Bad Religion and Rancid were willing to operate (to varying degrees) within the confines of the mainstream music industry, NOFX preferred the principles of restricted artistic production. While the band would initially signify such in refusing to release promotional videos and grant interviews, their follow up to the *Punk In Drublic* album best emphasizes their resistance to becoming the targets of mainstream tastes. The band's sixth studio album, released on compact disc as *Heavy Petting Zoo* and on vinyl as *Eating Lamb* in 1996, offered cover iconographies, unique to each release format, depicting a farmhand engaging in sexual acts with a lamb. Though the lyrical contents of the record itself would not touch upon punk's emerging mainstream popularity, the band dedicated space in the album's liner notes toward reinforcing their wish to remain restricted artistic producers:

No thanx to: MTV - Quit Bugging Us

Major Labels - Quit Bugging Us

Commercial Radio Stations - Quit Playing Us

We've been doin' just fine all these years without you so

LEAVE US THE FUCK ALONE!

(Heavy Petting Zoo [Liner Notes]: 1996)

With the release of the band's subsequent album, 1997's *So Long, And Thanks For All The Shoes*, Burkett's lyrics would also express his displeasure with punk engagements of mainstream culture industries. In particular, the songs "It's My Job To Keep Punk Rock Elite" and "The Desperation's Gone" characterize punk's entrance into the field of large-scale production as a source of pronounced anxiety:

Indiscriminate? I'd rather be elite / I'll choose my own shit scene
Unsubstantiated rumors flown are true / I'm here for me, not you.
Non-conglomerate, I mean what I say / I'm not you fucking scapegoat
Apparently, I've alienated some / It seems my job's half-done
You'll never understand it / Try to buy and brand it
I win, you lose / 'Cause it's my job to keep punk rock elite
This music ain't your fucking industry

(NOFX, "It's My Job To Keep Punk Rock Elite"

So Long, And Thanks For All The Shoes, 1997; Fat Wreck Chords)

Turn, tune the knob, K-Go / Some altera-radio /
Strategic marketing hype, media, stereotype / Has our music been castrated ? *Yes*
To you it may sound good / To me it sounds all wrong
The notes and chords sound similar / The same forbidden beat but
The desperation's gone / The song's the same

(NOFX, "The Desperation's Gone".

So Long, And Thanks For All The Shoes, 1997; Fat Wreck Chords.

Italics denote additional lyric in liner notes; not spoken)

These songs problematize punk's collusion with mainstream culture industries while affirming Burkett's own status as a legitimated restricted artistic producer. Whereas "The Desperation's Gone" bemoans homogenizing trends in punk that render the musical form 'castrated' and ineffectual, "It's My Job To Keep Punk Rock Elite" outlines the duties Burkett takes upon himself to 'alienate' those listeners attracted to the art form by virtue of the inauthentic and inherently corrupted aims of mainstream culture. Incorporating a narrative in keeping with the Frankfurtian form of punk production, Burkett and the band reinforce their identity as its authentic representatives. NOFX's *So Long, And Thanks For All The Shoes* asserts their status as representatives of restricted artistic production and spokespersons for refusing favor with broader mainstream audiences. While these patterns of artistic practice reflect previous efforts of bands like Crass and many of the American Hardcore groups, that NOFX made these claims *despite* their popularity with mainstream audiences renders them something of a unique case.

7.4.2) *Anti-Flag and the 'Underground Network'*

Burkett's preference for restricted artistic production is reflected through the types of acts his label would add to the roster throughout the ensuing half-decade. In 2000, for example and of particular note, Fat Wreck Chords signed the highly political Pittsburgh-based group Anti-Flag. Having previously released two pointedly anti-authoritarian records (their 1996 full-length debut *Die For The Government* and 1999's *A New Kind of Army*) on their own A-F Records imprint, the group - whose line-up had solidified to include co-lyricists Justin Sane and Chris #2, guitarist Chris Head and drummer Pat Thetic - released their Fat Wreck Chords debut *Underground Network* in 2001. Like Propagandhi's *Less Talk, More Rock*, Anti-Flag adopted

the practice of utilizing album insert space to contextualize their lyrics, educate their listeners, and share alternative information sources and activist organizations.³⁸ Though the record contains a number of songs about unfettered state powers and false consciousness among the general public,³⁹ the album's title-track promoted the formation of 'underground' information networks to combat the hegemonic authority of bourgeois culture. Anti-Flag used their relationship with one of the better known independent punk labels to position themselves as advocates for independent distribution of information and the educational capacities of the punk rock art form. Nevertheless, Anti-Flag's stance resembles that of acts such as the Dead Kennedys in assuming the role of Gramscian intellectuals while accrediting aspects of Frankfurtian ideology in maintaining distance from the ostensibly corruptive influences of the mainstream media system:

Underground Network - Alternative communication

Corporate media can't keep us beat down, brainwashed, enslaved

[Spoken] Just take a look around the world and you're going to find that nearly all mass media are owned and controlled by a handful of conservative capitalists. We must devise and

³⁸ The *Underground Network* liner notes include, among other offerings, excerpts from Progressive Editor Matthew Rothschild's article "Congress Considers More Corporate Welfare," passages from Chomsky and Herman's *Manufacturing Consent*, and a song explication prepared by celebrated critical historian Howard Zinn.

³⁹ Consider the following lyrical excerpts: "Rats, moneys, mice - teach 'em little tricks / stay far from creativity, and from politics / 'Cause the multinationals need a solid work force / or their growing profit margins will be wiped out at the source / Your prison warden is your school / training you to be a social screw / stage a jailbreak, swim against the flow / show those motherfuckers what you know! (Justin Sane, "A Start": 2001); "Let the feds pass a law that takes your rights away / 'Cause 'you gotta sacrifice if you wanna stay safe / 'til the day you find the feds in your back pocket / locking you away for saying 'question', 'think' or 'stop it' / Social divisions encouraged by the few / those few in power suckerin' suckers like you / as corporate welfare flows through the state / yeah, big business takes more than their fair take" (Justin Sane, "Watch The Right": 2001)

implement alternative methods of distributing our news, our information, our ideas - people
worldwide working to take a stand, to tell the truth!

(Anti-Flag, "Underground Network"

Underground Network, 2001; A-F Records)

While significant punk acts of the early 1990s reinvigorated discourse surrounding the spectre of mainstream co-optation, many would nevertheless make concessions. With the notable exception of Propagandhi, each of the acts discussed in this chapter, in spite of their preferred philosophy of restricted artistic production, would participate in the Vans Warped Tour summer concert festival throughout the 1990s and beyond. Founded in 1995 by Kevin Lyman, the Vans Warped tour constituted a corporate-sponsored travelling punk rock festival that took of the growing alignment between 'skate punk' and the 'extreme sports' cultures of skateboarding and snowboarding. Enduring for twenty years at the time of this writing, the Warped tour utilizes a multi-stage outlay to support more than forty bands over the span of a single-day festival. Many acts which might otherwise be seen to hold anti-corporate principles would risk participating with the festival, often suggesting that the benefits of embarking on a communal 'summer camp' takes precedence over maintaining a stringent distance from mainstream culture industries. Beyond marking the limits of the categories of punk artists which I use here, this example also underscores the manner in which notions of heretical punk artistic practice evolved, in part, as former acts of heresy were normalized and became conventional with the contemporary artistic population.

7.4.3) *Bad Religion on the 'Subcultural Retinue'*

While NOFX tailored much of their artistic output in the latter half of the 1990s to extolling the virtues of restricted artistic production, Bad Religion problematized this mindset with the release of the band's 1996 album *The Gray Race*. At various points, the album criticizes the processes whereby individuals align themselves with exclusionary movements in order to develop status and identity within the context of limited community relations. In keeping with the theories of Bourdieu, Graffin (the band's sole lyricist at this point) suggests that the formation of group identities (and, by extension, group ideologies) lead to insurmountable differences between factions:

Despite that he saw blatant similarity / he struggled to find a distinctive moiety
All he found was vulgar superficiality / but he focused it to sharpness
and shared it with the others / it signified his anger and his misery
Them and Us / Lobbying determined through a mire of disbelievers
Them and us / dire perpetuation and incongruous insistence
That there really is a difference between them and us
I heard him say 'we can take them all' / But he didn't know who they were
and he didn't know who we were / and there wasn't any reason, or motive, or value to his story
just allegory imitation glory / and the desperate feeble search for a friend

(Bad Religion, "Them And Us"

The Gray Race, 1996; Atlantic Records)

Just as these lyrics accuse those who hold positions of prominence within such movements of opportunistically bolstering their own status as group authorities, and seeking out new converts for that purpose, the song "Empty Causes" reflects back upon the American hardcore movement of the 1980s and internal reactions to the 1981 assassination attempt of Ronald Reagan:

Well, the shots rang out like popcorn and the Chief was hit and rushed out of sight

The mohawk-chain, leather brigade rejoiced maliciously on that night

Someone cried out 'fuck the government' / his mates couldn't define what he meant

So no one gave them the time of day and the scene died away

Empty causes / a war for the body, an army for the mind

Empty causes / losing steam as time goes by

Could it be that everybody selfishly desires their own personal retinue?

And that causes are just manifestations of too much time and far too little to do?

(Bad Religion, "Empty Causes")

The Gray Race, 1996; Atlantic Records)

With "Empty Causes," Bad Religion provides a less than flattering analysis of the punk subculture. Characterizing the ideological temperament of the early 1980s American hardcore subculture as devoid of clear and widely recognized beliefs and agendas (and thus doomed due to a lack of consensus building), Graffin raises the possibility that participants might gravitate

toward the subculture for distinctly individualistic reasons: cultivating a population of 'followers.' Graffin and the band suggest that the desire to legitimate one's subcultural identity through the accumulation of subcultural capital serves as a considerable impediment to the formation of a substantive, collectivist counter-hegemonic movement.

Graffin posted an essay, entitled "A Punk Synopsis," to the official Bad Religion website following the release of their 1998 album *No Substance*.⁴⁰ It articulates Graffin's perspectives regarding the counter-intuitive nature of punk subcultural conventions which, in his view, contribute to the development of exclusivist punk subcultural communities:

About two weeks ago I received a letter from a punker who said he used to be a fan of Bad Religion. Used to be, that is, until we let him down by releasing our last two albums which didn't fit his definition of punk. There weren't any songs against the establishment, he claimed (which isn't true by the way), so how can you call it Bad Religion? Indeed how can you guys call yourself punk? He went on to imply that we don't know anything about what punk is because we are so out of it. He was clearly angry, and intolerant of what our recent music actually had to say. He believed that the sanctity of the punk establishment had been infringed on somehow by our last two albums (but he also noted that our previous seven albums weren't guilty of such treason). The very same day I ran into someone on the street in the town where I live and he recognized me as the singer of Bad Religion. Like the guy who sent me the letter, he too was a punker, but he wasn't angry or judgmental...His

⁴⁰ Though this essay is no longer housed on the official Bad Religion website, alternative web sources have archived it. These sources do not provide date of publication. Graffin's own claim that the displeased fan in question claimed to prefer the band's first seven albums to their most recent two indicates that *No Substance* was their most recent album to that point (assuming that Graffin does not consider the band's pair of compilation albums, nor the disowned *Into The Unknown* album, as formal albums).

open desire for opinion, and his focus on relevant issues were refreshing and it made me remember all the great things about the punkers I grew up with and still interact with today: open-minded, inclusive, unpretentious and not presumptuous, and willing to confront the people or institutions that seemed unfair or unjust (Graffin, 1998).

To this point, Graffin recounts his experiences with these listeners as embodiments of contrasting manifestations of punk ideology - one promoting strict adherence to dogmatic perspectives on punk and the maintenance of exclusionary practices; another celebrating sharing information, inciting critical thought, and promoting collective discourse. Subsequently, and drawing on Bad Religion's earliest artistic intentions, Graffin links the Frankfurtian ideological perspective with the processes through which punk artists and producers vie to establish claims to personal status within the wider field:

Instead of being concerned with establishing an institution within which we could exclude others (which, sadly, is what many punkers really want), we were interested in including people who felt estranged by, or disillusioned with their social surroundings. In that one day I experienced some of the best things about punk, the traits exhibited by the kid on the street, and the worst things about punk: the negative, self-righteous, dogmatic thinking of the kid who wrote the letter. Both of them were self-acknowledged punkers yet they were from almost opposite ideological poles. For 16 years now I have been a member of this strange sub-culture, and I have come to realize that there are both liberal and conservative wings of it. In that sense it is a microcosm of society in general (Graffin, 1998)

Graffin channels Bourdieu in alleging that those possessed of the dogmatic perspective seek to make the punk subcultural field an 'institution' through the promotion of narrow (and, by extension self-serving) definitions. This conflicts with Graffin's own Gramscianesque perspective that the ability to promote knowledge, critical awareness, and a willingness to 'confront people or institutions which seemed unfair or unjust' is paramount. Concluding his synopsis, Graffin correlates the popularity of restrictive methods of punk artistic production with a contingent of producers and independent label operators who long to retain their recognition and personal status as authoritative punk knowledge producers:

Strangely, punk is quickly becoming mainstream. Last year, more people bought punk rock records, tapes, CDS, t-shirts, stickers, and show tickets, than ever before. As in any capitalistic situation, the punk market is experiencing a focal shift away from the original intent of the art (or product) toward the creation of a credo or indoctrination surrounding the marketing of the product. Why else would entire music labels market themselves as punk labels? Because they are selling fashion and building a sub-cultural retinue instead of promoting honesty and creativity of its artists. This is a sad state of affairs in the music industry that occurs at the independent-label level as well as in the majors. Therefore, it is no wonder that there are a bunch of punk police out there monitoring whether bands like ours fit the stereotype, and match their dogmatic view of acceptability. (Graffin, 1998).

Graffin correlates adherence to "punk dogma" with the marketing strategies employed by self-professed punk rock labels including, one can safely assume, those of Burkett's Fat Wreck Chords and Gurewitz's Epitaph Records. In contrast to Burkett's previous assertion that the

mainstream culture industry might endanger (or, more pointedly, "castrate") the sanctity of the punk rock musical form by ensuring its annexation into the sub-field of large-scale production, Graffin appears to problematize stern allegiance to the philosophy of restricted artistic production; a subcultural pre-occupation with authenticating punk (through exclusivist means) prevents sharing ideas and engaging in collective critical discourse.

While punk rock's status as the mainstream media-accredited "next big thing" would prove to be short lived, punk rock's mainstream acceptance throughout the mid-1990s once again popularized divergent positions on the ideological bedrock and overarching purpose of the artform. While Bad Religion and, to a lesser extent, Rancid, would use large-scale artistic distribution channels to extend socially critical discourse among the widest possible populations, NOFX and the roster of Fat Wreck Chords abided with Frankfurtian principles of restricted artistic production. By the close of the 20th century, the general field of punk rock artistic production had, once again, entrenched competing ideological narratives. However the American presidency of George W. Bush and his administration's movements toward declaring a "war on terror" would soon inaugurate a unique period in the history of the punk rock musical form.

7.5) The Bush Administration, the "War on Terror" and the *Patriot Act*

As the two-term Presidency of Democrat Bill Clinton neared conclusion, the United States entered a particularly controversial era in American politics. While the Democratic Party put Vice President Al Gore forward as their presidential candidate, the Republican party nominated Texas Governor George W. Bush. Popular wisdom suggested that Bush's lack of

international political acumen might decrease the odds of Republican success, but Bush curried favor from the party by endorsing a platform of neoconservative social policies, the promise of tax cuts, and increased military spending. As the polls closed on November 7th of 2000, late reports from the "swing state" of Florida suggested that Bush had a narrow lead (though not the popular vote). Though Gore and the Democratic party would contest these results, the United States Supreme Court validated Bush's victory on the 12th of December, 2000. Amid critical speculation that the State of Florida had rigged the results of the election by discounting the ballots of a substantial number of voters (see the 2002 short documentary *Unprecedented: The 2000 Presidential Election* and Michael Moore's 2004 documentary *Fahrenheit 9/11*), Bush was sworn in as President elect on January 20th, 2001.

The following September, operatives of the international terrorist group al- Qaeda hijacked four commercial airliners, struck New York's World Trade Center and the Pentagon, and caused the immediate deaths of nearly 3,000 persons. Shortly thereafter the United States declared a "war on terror," forming a coalition of sympathetic nations (including Canada and the United Kingdom) in order to defeat Afghanistan's fundamentalist Taliban government. Subsequent measures to decrease the risk of further incidents of terrorism sparked allegations that the Bush Administration might have utilized the 9/11 attacks as justification to meet a number of questionable domestic and international objectives. Two of the most controversial administrative strategies were the 2001 passage of the *Patriot Act* and the American invasion of Iraq in 2003.

Passed through Congress on the 26th of October 2001 with little preliminary public discourse, the *Patriot Act* (formally the *Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act* of 2001) was characterized

as a crucial measure through which to combat domestic terrorism. Granting American authorities the ability to intercept the private correspondence of citizens without probable cause (Wong, 2006a; 2006b), Administrative officials characterized the *Patriot Act* as a necessary infringement upon the personal privacy of American subjects. Critics worried that the legislation reduced the Constitutional rights of Americans (Gorham-Oscilowski & Jaeger, 2008). Just two years following, on the basis of falsified evidence that Iraq was attempting to manufacture nuclear weaponry, the United States invaded Iraq to displace Hussein and implement a “democratic” political system in March of 2003. Given Iraq's status as an oil rich country and American Vice President Dick Cheney's relationship with the Halliburton Oil corporation, critics suggested Iraq's natural resources may also have been important to the cause. Reports of escalating civilian casualties on both sides, and the revelation that weapons of mass destruction were not present, would inspire some critical public narratives characterizing George W. Bush and his administration as war criminals (Hil, 2005; van der Heide, 2013). During this dark period in Western political history a number of punk producers revised their artistic philosophies in better keeping with the broader socio-political context. This is reflected in critically themed punk rock concept records – issued by the likes of Bad Religion, Anti-Flag, NOFX, and, most controversially, Leftover Crack – sought to to raise a critical political awareness that might contribute to the defeat of the Republican party during the 2004 United States Presidential election.

7.5.1) NOFX Post-9/11: Punkvoter.com and The War on Errorism

Since Mike Burkett and NOFX had staunchly endorsed a restricted philosophy of punk artistic production, the 2002 announcement that Burkett had founded a website called *Punkvoter.com* was unexpected. Defining itself as "a grassroots coalition of punk bands, punk labels, and most importantly punk fans coming together to form a united front in opposition to the dangerous, deadly and destructive policies of George Bush, Jr.," Burkett's *Punkvoter.com* website posted a manifesto announcing the group's intentions "to inform, inspire, enrage and help turn millions of punk fans into a political force to be reckoned with" (Diehl, 2007: 189-90). Further, the website would go on to claim that,

Punk bands, musicians, and record labels have built a coalition to educate, register and mobilize progressive voters...something needs to be done to unite the youth vote and bring real activism back into our society. Punk rock has always been on the edge and in the forefront of politics. It is time to energize the majority of today's disenfranchised youth movement and punk rockers to make a change in reality.

The website provided a wealth of information regarding Bush's 'theft' of the Presidency and the Constitutional dangers posed by the *Patriot Act*, while advising punk audiences to become registered voters in preparation for the 2004 Presidential Election.

Released the following sixth of May 2003, NOFX's ninth studio album, *The War on Errorism*, abandoned the band's tradition of criticizing punk rock's relationship with the culture industry. Instead, *The War on Errorism* offered a far from subtle criticism of the Bush Administration and the socially conservative ideological climate that arose in the wake of the 9/11 terror attacks. The album title lampooned Bush's so-called 'War on Terror' and used critical

iconography (a caricature of George W. Bush in Clown face against the backdrop of the American flag), together with liner notes composed by Burkett as an introduction to the album:

Unlike other NOFX CD's, this one has some bonus stuff. We've included an enhanced CD featuring some videos and some political commentary. Yeah, we're not really known for our politics, but maybe it's time we are...People need an alternative source for information. This is our way to help inform the public on how we are all getting ass fucked...for being the so-called leader of democracy, the United States is now the butt of a worldwide joke. The Republican party stole the election and illegally moved into the White House...a lot of you reading this might be thinking that we're assholes or American traitors. Well, we may be assholes, but we're certainly not traitors. We are actually patriots in the true sense of the world. WE ARE THE ONES calling attention to the faults in our government and trying to fix them. WE ARE THE ONES trying to expose mistakes in order to learn from them instead of covering them up. WE ARE THE ONES who have concern for more than just ourselves. WE ARE THE ONES trying to educate people. WE ARE THE ONES who question authority instead of simply obeying it...That's what this is really about: positive change. We don't want to bash America, we want to make it better. In order to make it better, you must first point out what is wrong with it.

(NOFX, "Liner Notes". *The War on Errorism*, 2003; Epitaph Records)

Though the majority of *The War on Errorism* contained NOFX's typical irreverent material, a notable bloc of the album's tracks - including "Franco Un-American" and "The Idiots Are Taking Over" - introduced themes of social activism, alternative (or non-mainstream)

information resources and critiques of the Bush Administration. In "Franco Un-American", Burkett reflects upon how alternative information sources - a few of which are explicitly name-checked - led to his own political enlightenment:

I never thought about the universe, it made me feel small
Never thought about the problems of this planet at all
Global warming, radio-active sites / Imperialistic wrongs and animal rights! No!
Why think of all the bad things when life is so good?
Why help with an 'am' when there's always a 'could'?
Let the whales worry about the poisons in the sea / Outside of California, it's foreign policy
I don't want changes, I have no reactions / Your dilemmas are my distractions
That's no way to go, Franco Un-American

I never looked around, never second-guessed
Then I read some Howard Zinn, now I'm always depressed
And now I can't sleep from years of apathy / All because I read a little Noam Chomsky
I'm eating vegetation, 'cause of Fast Food Nation
I'm wearing uncomfortable shoes 'cause of globalization
I'm watching Michael Moore expose the awful truth
I'm listening to Public Enemy and Reagan Youth
I see no world peace 'cause of zealous armed forces
I eat no breath-mints 'cause they're from de-hoofed horses
Now I can't believe; what an absolute failure

The president's laughing 'cause we voted for Nader

(NOFX, "Franco Un-American".

The War on Errorism, 2003; Epitaph Records)

With "Franco Un-American," then, NOFX adopts tactics similar to Propagandhi's *Less Talk More Rock* and Anti-Flag's post *Underground Network* in the utilization of liner note space. Advocating alternative education for their listenership, NOFX goes so far as to incorporate references to notable thinkers and publications directly in their lyrics. The record's most direct attack upon Conservative America, "The Idiots Are Taking Over" takes a similar stance:

It's not the right time to be sober / Now the idiots have taken over

Spreading like a social cancer, is there an answer?

Mensa membership conceding / Tell me why and how are all the stupid people breeding

Watson, it's really elementary / The industrial revolution has flipped the bitch on evolution

The benevolent and wise are being thwarted, ostracized, what a bummer / The world keeps
getting dumber

Insensitivity is standard and faith is being fancied over reason

Darwin's rolling over in his coffin / The fittest are surviving much less often

Now everything seems to be reversing, and it's worsening.

There's no point for democracy when ignorance is celebrated

Political scientists get the same one vote as some Arkansas inbred

Majority rule, don't work in mental institutions

Sometimes the smallest softest voice carries the grand biggest solutions

(NOFX, "Franco Un-American".

The War on Errorism, 2003; Epitaph Records)

The band also broke with longstanding expectations by releasing a music video, their first since 1994, to accompany the song "Franco Un-American"; a crudely animated piece continuing the album's criticism of the Bush Administration. Given the videos use of visuals, including George W. Bush lighting a cigar with the American Constitution and an illustration conflating the bloodshed in Iraq with American oil interests, it is doubtful that the band expected high-rotation commercial airplay. That NOFX would formally release a music video at all transmits volumes regarding their context-specific transition from restricted artistic producers to aspiring Gramscian intellectuals. In lieu of taking measures to prevent mass audiences from gravitating toward their music, release of *The War on Errorism* album and the "Franco Un-American" video targeted mass audiences with a view to denying Bush a second presidential term.

7.5.2) *Rock Against Bush, CNN, and Alternative Press*

The bands on this comp have come together for one reason, and that's to express our outrage at - and form a unified front against - the dangerous, destructive, and deadly policies of George W. Bush and his administration.

(Liner Notes, *Rock Against Bush Volume I*,

The months following the release of *The War on Errorism* played host to a number of occasions whereby Burkett would further break with his long-held convictions regarding the mainstream culture industry. In April 2004, Fat Wreck Chords released *Rock Against Bush Volume 1*. The record sought to compile songs from a number of high-profile punk rock acts, unified in their condemnation of the Bush Administration and its policies. Alongside the longstanding stable of Fat Wreck Chords artists (including Anti-Flag, Against Me! and Rise Against), the album featured songs by bands with a mainstream prominence wrought through deals with corporate recording labels (including Alkaline Trio, New Found Glory and the prominent Canadian group Sum 41). For the first time in the history of Burkett's Fat Wreck Chords, the label re-released corporate recording properties under the banner of the Fat imprint. Burkett clearly viewed this encroachment upon his previously celebrated principles of restricted artistic distribution as justifiable for the sake of exposing new audiences to the critical narratives and sentiments featured throughout the *Rock Against Bush* album.

The first *Rock Against Bush* compilation thrust Burkett and Propagandhi, who had regrouped and released the album *Today's Empires Tomorrow's Ashes*, in 2001, into a burgeoningly antagonistic relationship. Burkett had approached Propagandhi about submitting a song to the first edition of the compilation. While Propagandhi would initially agree despite reservations, their submission included the demand that the liner notes included a statement rejecting the involvement of military-industrial billionaire George Soros, who had extended the punkvoter movement his support. Burkett would inevitably balk at the inclusion of this statement, and justify his reasoning through punk micro-media information channels as follows:

So we get the liner notes from the band and at the end it says, "This message was not brought to you by George Soros". This is where the problem starts. George Soros is a Billionaire who got his money from exploiting the foreign currency exchange. He screwed a bunch of countries to make his money. It is also important to note that he is also a member of the Carlyle Group, which is a company that makes money from selling weapons. Okay, that sucks. Meanwhile he has been giving close to 500 million dollars annually to progressive causes and has founded a network of philanthropic organizations in over 50 nations throughout the planet. He is spending a good part of his fortune trying to get Bush out of office. Maybe he feels guilty or something, I don't know. The point is that he has given money not to us, but to many great organizations such as Moveon.org and America Coming Together, and these organizations help support us. I didn't want an anti-Soros message on the first Rock Against Bush comp, because I don't want to make enemies within our movement. I am trying to unite people, not alienate them from each other. So I asked Chris from Propagandhi if he wouldn't mind taking that last Soros comment out of their liner notes. He said he wouldn't take anything out. [...] So I ask Propagandhi to be on the second comp with all the lyrics intact and with the George Soros comment and everything. NO CENSORSHIP. Chris politely said no thanks. He said that the band has had cold feet about the comp from the beginning, that their politics don't mesh with ours, and that he doesn't want to be shuffled on to the 2nd comp. I was bummed, but I felt that our message of getting Bush out was more important than Propagandhi's anti-Soros message. There are no hard feelings between the band and I. Not only do I think they are

the most important band in punk rock, but I feel that they are amazing people, and I am incredibly proud to put out their records.

(Punknews.org contributor 'Aubin', quoting Mike Burkett,
2004; Punknews.org)

In another potential act of punk subcultural heresy, Burkett agreed to break with his media embargo for the sake of a CNN piece on the Punk Voter movement. Though primarily a curiosity piece about an inherently 'anti-system' musical movement advocating that listeners engage with the mainstream political system, it afforded Burkett the opportunity to articulate his interests and goals through a widely accessible information medium.⁴¹ Portions of the transcript read as follows:

Fat Mike from NOFX is what you might call the spiritual leader of the tour. He says it's all about getting kids angry and scared.

I explained to them the *Patriot Act* and how the government now knows what books you check out and what you're looking at on your computer [...] They're anti-government, they're anti- the system, and we're trying to tell them...you have to care now.

⁴¹ The CNN piece drew attention to the lyrical excerpt, from "Franco Un-American," which forecasts a second Bush term due to 'leftist' voters supporting Green Party candidate Ralph Nader. While the Punk Voter movement formally promoted itself as bi-partisan, the way Burkett became the central representative of the movement - while campaigning against Ralph Nader and the Green Party, undercut the credibility of the movement. Critiques of Burkett and the movement as an act of 'artistic heresy,' however, drew more from the 'theory of mainstream co-optation' than Burkett's false bi-partisanship based on the scorn of adherents to the sub-field of restricted punk artistic production.

Are you telling kids that they need to vote for John Kerry?

We're not telling kids who to vote for at all. We're telling them they should register to vote, and we're telling them our point of view.

(Burkett, quoted from CNN Interview, 2004; questions in italic bold)

As Burkett lifted his personal mainstream media embargo with the CNN interview, NOFX followed suit with a cover-story appearance featured in the March 2004 issue of the niche-media entertainment publication *Alternative Press*. Accompanied by a cover image of the band parodying the Dixie Chick's post 9-11 *Entertainment Weekly* photo shoot,⁴² NOFX's first mainstream media interview in seven years explained the basis for their newfound media availability:

So, this is your first NOFX interview in seven years. Why now?

Burkett: Because we think it's the right time to start using the mainstream music media for our own political agenda, where we felt we were being used back in the '90s.

Have you been thinking about ending your media ban for a while?

⁴² Intertextually citing the manner in which the Dixie Chicks had been criticized by the Country Music industry for speaking out against the Bush Administration.

Burkett: Well, it's been my plan for a couple years. When the 2004 election was coming up, the band was gonna start doing interviews again, and we figured we'd get a lot of good slots and covers. And we could use it for our political message [...] our political agenda is, by the way, to get Bush out of office

(Bayer, 2004: 73)

Burkett had resigned himself to abandoning the conventions of restricted punk artistic production for the sake of a more substantive political goal, with intentions of parlaying the implicit subcultural controversy surrounding the decision into an increased public awareness of the punk voter movement. The June 2004 edition of *Alternative Press* featured an article where a plethora of punk artists of profile (regardless of their status as 'underground' or 'mainstream' acts) submitted personal pieces highlighting their support for the overarching political objectives of the group. Featuring artists ranging from Burkett to Jello Biafra, as well as a diverse cast of characters including members from Anti-Flag, The Offspring, Green Day, Against Me!, and Joan Jett, Laakso's (2004) *Alternative Press* article gives the impression of a general ideological consensus among diverse punk artistic representatives. Of course, NOFX and *Alternative Press* Magazine had mutual best interests, with NOFX willing to grant the magazine their first interview in seven years in exchange for subsequent features focusing upon the exploits of the movement. Fat Wreck Chords would release a second volume in the *Rock Against Bush* series in August of 2004.

7.5.3) *Anti-Flag and the Logic of Mainstream Co-operation*

Burkett and NOFX's decision to act against the principles of restricted punk artistic production for the greater political good coincides with a similar ideological sea-change amongst some of the more politically-minded acts on the Fat Wreck Chords roster. Bands including Rise Against, Against Me!⁴³ and Anti-Flag would not only sign recording contracts with mainstream record labels, but justify doing so through official press releases and interview opportunities. Given that Anti-Flag, in particular, had staunchly advocated 'underground' information networks and principles of restricted artistic production, members of the band seemed to take great care in articulating their reasoning for joining the RCA recording label in October of 2004. Primarily, the band cited the promise of complete artistic freedom and making their music accessible to untapped audiences. As Anti-Flag drummer Pat Thetic would note;

We've been getting [major label recording] offers for a long time, and then last year, a year and a half ago, the offers started to get more serious. And what we did is we sat down and said, '[complete artistic freedom] is what we want. Unless you are willing to give us this, there's no point in talking. [Furthermore] If you look at the last election result, I'm sure you've seen that map with the coasts being blue and the middle being red? Our records aren't in the middle, and we would like them to get to the middle.

(Punknews.org, 2005)

⁴³ I consider the significant case study of Against Me!'s movement toward 'punk heresy' extensively elsewhere.

A separate interview from this same time period, conducted with Anti-Flag guitarist Chris #2, spoke to the band's decision to sign with the RCA imprint in order to reach beyond the 'converted' ranks of the punk rock faithful:

Every step of Anti-Flag's life has been about [reaching untapped audiences], which is why people have had some many problems with every decision we make. It goes back to the very first thing you and I talked about: if you're not getting a reaction, if people are complacent, you're doing the wrong thing...Every decision on the surface may seem a little suspicious. Nobody may be more suspicious of people trying to do the things that Tom Morello [of Rage Against The Machine] and [Documentarian] Michael Moore say they do—covertly infiltrating the mainstream, making the social consciousness grow—no one may be more critical about that than us. But the time is right to make this stand. We felt the songs we had were better than any songs we'd ever had. It was ripe for the taking.

(McKibbin, *The Red Alert*, 2006)

Despite Chris #2's insinuation that he shares in Frankfurtian suspicions of culture industries, he suggests that popularising critical perspectives and dissent outweigh arguments surrounding co-optation, given the current political climate. Anti-Flag would further demonstrate their re-alignment of artistic method in joining forces with Democratic Congressman Jim McDermott. As described by author Matt Diehl (2007):

In 2006 Sony issued a "media advisory" about Sony-signed band Anti-Flag's protest activity: "On March 24th, 2006, members of Anti-Fag and Congressman Jim McDermott

(D-WA), the legislative leader on Depleted Uranium in combat zones, including Iraq, and launch a petition drive. The musicians worked with the congressman on their new song, 'Depleted Uranium Is a War Crime' and premiered it with a congressional action on After Downing Street Coalition's Web site."

When Anti-Flag released their 2006 debut album for the RCA label, *For Blood and Empire*, the pointed critique of Bush administration policies revisited their condemnation of the War on Terror. Cover iconography captured the image of a White House front lawn featuring rows of white memorial crosses. Given the 2006 release date, the album did not impact the Punk Voter movement or contribute to denying the Bush Administration a second term in office.

Alas, Bush would secure a second term in 2004. Though Punk Voter co-founder Toby Jeg would claim, via a post-election *Alternative Press* feature, that the Punk Voter movement might have contributed to the above-average youth voter turnout, he suggested that the Anti-Bush movement failed because Republicans made phobic claims that a Democratic victory would lead to the redefinition of 'marriage' in America:

According to Rock the Vote and MTV, 'get out the vote' groups like *Punk Voter* and *Music For America* would have succeeded if they could motivate 20 million young Americans to show up. And guess what? Over 21 million young voters turned out at the polls, which means we exceeded the mark set for success [...] fact is, young people came out in record numbers - but alas, so did their dumbass, homophobic parents. We were actually the only demographic that voted against Bush in overwhelming numbers; and what this means - that is, if nature has anything to say about it - is that the homophobic intolerant politics of our

elders will die off and be replenished with our progressive values. Let's hear it for the life cycle! (Jeg, 2005: 14)

While Jeg's column speaks to the Punk Voter's intentions to continue in spite of the 2004 election results, the movement quietly ceased to be a few months following the Bush victory.

7.6) Ideological Debate and Artistic Illegitimacy: The Propagandhi/NOFX Discourse

By the time Propagandhi submitted their fourth full-length release *Potemkin City Limits* to the Fat Wreck Chords imprint, almost a year had passed since Bush had been granted a second term in office. This would not, however, prevent the group from issuing a song characterizing punk's new mainstream profile as a degradative co-optation of the punk artistic form. The song "Rock For Sustainable Capitalism" cites, intertextually, the failed Punk Voter movement, reasserting principles of restricted punk artistic production. The song opens with a pointed critique of Lars Frederiksen and, by extension, the punk legitimacy of Rancid (and their fans). As the song lyrics read:

I fuckin' love that one rock video where that fucking jack-ass mohawked millionaire
prances around by far the worst sausage party on earth,
where by mere chance he's caught on film shaking hands with an incredibly diverse collection
of patriotic skins / I like the message it sends:
"With a Rebel yell, Just Do Exactly What You're Told.
One million douche bags can't be wrong."

(Propagandhi, "Rock For Sustainable Capitalism".

Potemkin City Limits, 2005; Fat Wreck Chords/G7 Welcoming Committee)

The video in question was that of Lars Frederiksen's side project, The Bastards, and their rendition of the Billy Bragg anthem "To Have and to Have Not." This video, set at a house party, depicts Frederiksen milling through an assortment of (primarily white male) punk subculturalists. Here, Hannah channels the Dead Kennedys in noting the visual associations drawn between being an 'upstanding punk' and traditional rites of working class masculinity. Further, Hannah's claim that 'one million douche bags can't be wrong' clearly signifies that his contempt extends not to just Rancid, but their fanbase. Indeed, Hannah's specific use of the specification 'one million douchebags' likely stems from the fact that *...And Out Come The Wolves* had recently achieved one million record sales.⁴⁴

Though Rancid's involvement with the Punk Voter movement did not extend beyond the submission of a single song for the second volume of the *Rock Against Bush* compilation, Hannah cites them as the epitome of the artistically superficial, opportunistic and inherently corrupt punk artistic heretic. When the band next (intertextually) targets another specific artist, Hannah critiques the 'legitimate standing' of none other than Mike Burkett and NOFX. Beginning the verse with a lyrical excerpt lifted from the NOFX song "The Separation of Church and Skate" (from *The War on Errorism* album), Propagandhi take the opportunity to bring Burkett's legitimacy as a punk rock knowledge producer into question:

⁴⁴ This position correlates well with an interview conducted with Hannah shortly after the release of *Potemkin City Limits*. Though tracking down this specific interview has proven to constitute a hardship, the author nevertheless wishes to note a personal recollection pertaining to Hanna's analysis as to why the contemporary punk subculture harbors a problematic degree of political apathy: Quite simply, "Kids listen to Rancid".

"When did punk rock become so safe?" / You'll excuse me if I laugh in your face
as I itemize your receipts / and PowerPoint your balance sheets.

(Propagandhi, "Rock For Sustainable Capitalism".

Potemkin City Limits, 2005; Fat Wreck Chords/G7 Welcoming Committee)

Undercutting Burkett's status as a legitimate punk spokesperson is accomplished not only by alluding to his status as owner of the financially successful Fat Wreck Chords imprint. Hannah moves toward discrediting the legitimacy of any (and all) bands who participated in the Vans Warped Tour⁴⁵ before concluding in advocating for a return to 'authentic' restricted artistic practices:

Anyone remember when we used to believe
that music was a sacred place and not some fucking bank machine?
Not something you just bought and sold? How could we have been so naive?
Well, I think when all is said and done, just cause we were young doesn't mean we were wrong.

And I'll rock back and forth on this two-bit hobbyhorse 'til she splinters and gives way.

I'll tend the flowers by her grave. And whisper her name.

If anyone out there understands can I please see a show of hands

⁴⁵ Specifically: "I hear this year's Vans Warped Tour is "going green"/ I guess they heard that money grows on trees. Hope they ship all those shitty bands overseas like they did the factories [...]Music's power to describe, compel, renew... / It's all a distant second to the offers you can't refuse"..

just so I know I'm not insane? Ever get the feeling you've been played?
Well, that's rock for sustainable capitalism and you know,
we may face a scorched and lifeless earth,
but they're accountable to their shareholders first. That's how the world works.

(Propagandhi, "Rock For Sustainable Capitalism".

Potemkin City Limits, 2005; Fat Wreck Chords/G7 Welcoming Committee)

Hannah and Propagandhi thus insinuate that mainstream co-optation has ensured that punk rock now abides by the logic of the economic world proper, and advocate for a return to restricted principles of artistic production. Finally, The *Potemkin City Limits* album inlay would reproduce the lyrics to "Rock for Sustainable Capitalism" alongside a photograph of Mike Burkett engaged in a handshake with former Democratic Presidential Nominee John Kerry; one final, intertextually significant depiction of the relation between contemporary punk rock and the wider systems of power.

While "Rock For Sustainable Capitalism" asserts itself as a critical commentary upon the unsavory status of punk's ideological sanctity, interviews conducted with both Hannah and Kowalski during this period suggest that the song may have drawn implicit inspiration from the Punk Voters movements' influence upon longstanding processes of consecrating the authority to advocate. Note how the following excerpts find the band correlating their views on contemporary punk with the illegitimate standing of those artists advocating for political engagement:

Lots of the downer vibe [of *Potemkin City Limits*] is due to Hannah's despair at seeing politics becoming trendy for bands for a brief moment in time. "They're all trying to lead this parade suddenly when everybody through the '90s was snowboarding and fucking brokering video game deals for their bands and laughing at political punk bands." (Pratt, 2012)

With left-wing politics becoming a trend du jour in punk rock again, a band like Propagandhi, who have made a career of their hyper-politicised brand of punk, are left to wonder who their contemporaries are. "I think in some way, they genuinely want their message to get out, and they kind of believe their politics," Kowalski says of the current batch of angry socialist punkers with major label deals. "But their need to see their faces in magazines, and pose in front of the camera, and snarl and comb their halfheads into little fake mohawks is higher than their need for politics that people actually built over years. Now Oh Henry is in charge." (Sutherland, 2006)

I suggest that these snatches of personal discourse are influenced by an altogether different concern: namely, Propagandhi's desire to re-assert their own standing as authentically politicized punk artists by drawing attention to the illegitimacy of those now advocating for political engagement. When Hannah critiques his punk compatriots on the basis of their complicity with mainstream attention throughout the 1990s, he does so in a manner which calls attention to, while privileging, his own band's staunch refusal to do the same. Finally, Kowalski's disparaging comments about media-friendly, snarling faux-hawked 'halfheads' accomplishes the feat of denigrating the legitimacy-claims of artists taken as performing punk in

line with media expectations. Though purely speculative, I would also suggest interesting linkages between the specificity of Kowalski's comments and the trends in self-presentation endorsed by members of Anti-Flag and Green Day throughout *Alternative Press's* special Punk Voter edition. Propagandhi would sever ties with the Fat Wreck Chords label following *Potemkin City Limits'* release.

This would not prevent Burkett and NOFX from penning a pointed retort to Propagandhi's critique. Their 2006 album *Wolves in Wolves Clothing* featured a song, "One-Celled Creature", which critiqued Hannah and the core of Propagandhi's restricted artistic ideology, in part, by advocating for a Gramscian logic of artistic practice:

Life on a mattress in a robe / in a room full of emptiness
Knowledge has much better uses than self-pity and superiority
Maybe you are or could be the next Hoffman, Mahatma, or Chomsky
But no one will ever know
Are you saying music can't have a positive influence on society?
(Not with shitty melody it won't)
A sum of your parts are not gonna change any hearts / not with hate in your eyes
In order to lead by example you have to show a path to a better world / not a cell

(NOFX, "One-Celled Creature".

Wolves in Wolves Clothing, 2006; Fat Wreck Chords)

While Hannah and Propagandhi had long purposed their artistic output toward the dissemination of alternative knowledges and counter-hegemonic or 'competing' perspectives, their messages and music now seemed better tailored to a very limited contingent of punk audiences: those very few whom Hannah and the rest of the band deem 'authentic' in accordance with their own restricted-productive philosophies. Against this presupposition, Burkett and the rest of the band chastise Hannah for limiting the potential of their music to effect substantive social change. According to Burkett, then, Propagandhi had championed the erection and reinforcement of symbolic boundaries between 'legitimate' and 'illegitimate' subcultural artists in lieu of tailoring their artistry toward extra-subcultural audiences, to the detriment of the potential for change. The implicit narrative promoted the notion that abiding by artistic practices of restricted production necessarily limits the potential for knowledge to flow beyond the confines of restricted audiences. This suggests that Burkett perceives Propagandhi as having sacrificed the spread of critical and competing knowledges for the sake of, quite counterintuitively, promoting punk artistic isolation.

7.7) Conclusions

By the end of the mid-1990s, NOFX and Propagandhi served as fitting representatives of both Gramscian and Frankfurt traditions in punk ideology. Whereas Burkett and NOFX used their mainstream profile to advocate that punk rock retain distance from the operations of mainstream culture industries, Propagandhi celebrated the emergence of competing and counter-hegemonic perspectives, dedicating their practice toward the dissemination of critical, as well as progressive, knowledges. Ironically, one decade later, and against the backdrop of an Orwellian

Western political climate, these artists effectively switched ideological positions. As NOFX would come to advocate for the spread of critical perspectives by breaking with longstanding conventions of restricted legitimate punk artistic production, Propagandhi's "Rock For Sustainable Capitalism" criticized the politicization, and corresponding commodification, of the broader punk artistic field. Interviews conducted in relation to Propagandhi's inspiration for the song, however, suggest a corresponding uneasiness with the manner in which these newly-politicized acts offended the sensibilities of artists whose own claims to legitimacy resided in their staunch refusal of the mainstream culture industry. Meanwhile, as NOFX gradually moved toward assuming the role of Gramscian 'punk intellectuals', ideological poles would transition without finding an effective 'middle-ground.' The debate between NOFX and Propagandhi parallels earlier discursive regimes between Crass and the Clash in the late 1970s, the Dead Kennedys and the masculinist Hardcore Punk acts of the 1980s, and even the dueling perspectives issued by the likes of Bad Religion and NOFX throughout the late 1990s. Through a Bourdieuan lens, this 'legitimacy debate' resurfaces as a struggle, between ideologically differentiated artistic producers, to determine which contingent of punk artistic philosophy is 'superior' (and, by extension, which punk philosopher).

While it would be difficult to deny that the Punk Voter movement inspired some listeners to become more politically engaged, it is nevertheless telling that one of the movement's tangible legacies is the resuscitation of discursive rituals, among punk artists, through which to undermine one another's authority. Meanwhile, a variety of notable figures, from documentarian Michael Moore to *The Daily Show's* Jon Stewart, using their mainstream profiles to the same ends, increasing popular receptivity and demand for counter-hegemonic entertainment products. Meanwhile, following the end of the Punk Voter movement, Burkett and NOFX would drift back

into irreverent punk rock, replacing their advocacy for political engagement with an advocacy for cocaine and alcohol use. Propagandhi would move to the independent Canadian label Smallman Records following the end of their tenure with Burkett's label. However, as Smallman Records folded shortly after the release of the band's 2009 record *Supporting Caste*, the band signed with Epitaph Records and, by extension, become labelmates with many of the bands whom they claimed to revile, including Rancid. Finally, it is perhaps poetically ironic that history would accord Green Day as the band who best captured the tense political climate of post 9/11 America. Having long been ostracized from punk subculture and, more recently, declared passé by the mainstream record buying public, the band felt duly liberated to channel their displeasure with the Bush Administrations into the conceptual rock-opera record *American Idiot*. Beyond considerable album sales and recording industry awards, the album was translated into a popular Broadway musical.

Chapter 8: Conclusions and Final Thoughts

8.1) Contrasting Traditions in Punk Artistic Ideology

My dissertation has advanced an analysis of the ideological dimensions of the punk rock musical form. Subjecting notable cross sections of significant punk rock artistry and the testimonies of key punk artistic producers to qualitative sociological methods, I have spoken to the prospect that punk rock has long served as an artistic field harboring two recurring, yet inherently contradictory artistic philosophies. As chapter three argues, these artistic philosophies correlate well (without necessarily having been explicitly annexed from) Neo-Marxian theories regarding the social maintenance of hegemony and questions pertaining to the mainstream culture industry's role in perpetuating such processes. I have engaged with the artistry of a number of prominent punk rock artists - including the likes of The Clash, The Sex Pistols, The Dead Kennedys, Bad Religion and (post-Bush Administration) NOFX - who have acted in accordance with the Gramscian prospect that hegemony is most effectively challenged by 'underclass intellectuals' who encourage listeners to question the authority of our social institutions and culturally proscribed means of interacting with the world. Gramsci believed that exposing the broadest possible public to these alternative perspectives could bring the socially disempowered and dispossessed toward a collective recognition of their shared struggles and common interests. Meanwhile, I have argued that a second contingent of punk rock artists adopt principles consistent with the perspectives of such Neo-Marxist theorists as Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, who argue that the mainstream culture industry neutralizes the counter-hegemonic qualities and capacities of the artistic works it distributes. This vantage suggests that

the mainstream culture industry actively aspires to render socially critical music ideologically impotent while commodifying (and profiting from) the non-conformist styles and subcultural practices it appropriates. Such sentiments appear to inform the artistic practices of numerous punk rock artists - including Crass, Minor Threat, (pre-Bush Administration) NOFX and Propagandhi - who affirm 'underground' punk musical communities who maintain a stark disassociation from the mainstream culture industry and the mass audiences it attracts.

The presence of these polarized artistic ideologies has contributed to a process whereby artists choose a preferred philosophical position while criticizing, condemning, and undermining the legitimacy of others at the opposing end of the ideological spectrum. It follows that a long tradition of punk rock artists have crafted music meant to reflect upon, and instigate debates concerning, the significance of punk rock itself. These debates are framed around an imperative for arriving at a collective capacity to act if not for the illegitimate operation of artists from the opposing ideological position. I have noted a number of instances whereby punk artists have implicitly taken on the simultaneous roles of 'punk rock knowledge producer' and 'punk artistic ideological representative' while striving to demonize those artists advocating for the opposing ideological camp. Each note the transgressions of their opponents against the broader interests of the punk artistic form itself; interests which often boil down to advocating that the music and its messages be broadly dispersed in the interest of inspiring change, or resisting the wider culture industry to ensure that the art form retains its integrity and artistic authenticity. Though the punk positions articulated throughout this research serve as 'idealized' categories in a Weberian sense, the most significant variables reflect their artistic messages and practices; whether they wish to educate audience members beyond the 'punk faithful' or reinforce the restricted nature of the punk artistic field.

8.2) The Field of Punk Artistic Production

Nevertheless, and as the testimonies of many artists discussed here demonstrate, the field of punk artistic production is neither solely - nor, it could be argued, primarily - influenced by collectivist motivations. Efforts to codify and grant ideological weight to the concept of 'punk' have reflected individualistic concerns with legitimate status as a consecrated representative of the artistic medium and the beliefs it embodies. Informed by Bourdieu's contention that cultural consumption informs the development of personal identity, I have advanced numerous examples where debates surrounding ideology can, at one and the same time, be read as individualistic claims to hegemonic might and distinction. This applies both to punk fanzine producers and the musicians themselves. Media and artistic discourse surrounding punk rock often take the form of narratives centered around possession - as if 'punk' or the regional 'scenes' which emerged around it were a thing to be possessed. This means that the process whereby any given punk artistic producer advocates for either variant in artistic philosophy needs to be critically interrogated against the potential imperative of asserting the artists' individual claims to status, distinction and authority within the wider field. In this manner, longstanding trends in punk ideological debate perpetuate the individualistic 'game' of accruing an authoritative punk status and, thereby, power within the fields of punk subcultural production.

The prospect that the wider field of punk rock artistic production would appear bifurcated along ideological lines coincides with Bourdieu's conceptualization of the artistic world as a whole. In line with Bourdieu's framework, those advocating for principles of large-scale production also advocate on behalf of the broader field of power, operating to perpetuate the

'logic of the economic world.' Of course, an overarching suspicion of (and hostility toward) the field of large-scale production serves as something of a prerequisite toward one's legitimate standing within the culture of restricted artistic producers. Within the field of punk rock artistry, however, it is possible that artistic principles of large-scale production may have been less interested in the wider field of power and extracting personal financial gain, than using the platform of mainstream cultural creation and dissemination as a means of offering critical perspectives that might germinate amongst the broadest possible audience. While select punk rock artists might credibly be understood to value Gramscian views of the crucial role which intellectuals need play in instigating counter-hegemonic movements, a second contingent serves another purpose in resisting mainstream culture industries as a danger to the restricted artistic field as a whole. Nevertheless, and as Bourdieu would note, struggles centered around the collective imperatives of punk artistic culture cannot be easily separated from individualistic imperatives. I would go so far as to suggest that the counter-hegemonic capacities of the musical form are rendered ineffective as a result of the perpetuation of the divisionary conventions and discursive traditions through which punk artists accredit their superiority over other punk artists. As a collective artistic culture, punk rock mires itself in fracture and ensures its own inability to achieve consensus, rendering its likelihood of contributing substantively to social praxis equal to that of the Ouroboros escaping its own grasp.

I have dedicated some attention toward two occasions on which self-accredited punk rock artists quite consciously undertook calculated attempts to infiltrate mainstream culture industries in accordance with their own distinctly counter-hegemonic aims. The 'year zero' punk rock movement of the late 1970s saw the formation of the Sex Pistols and The Clash; two groups who ultimately purposed their artistry toward a critique of social organization under Western

capitalism. The second instance occurred in the mid-2000s, when a gathering of formerly 'restricted' punk rock artistic producers, including NOFX and Anti-Flag, recalibrated the ideologies propelling their artistic production against the backdrop of the Orwellian initiatives of the George W. Bush administration. Whereas members of the Sex Pistols and The Clash appear to have endorsed Gramscian artistic aims from the very onset of their formation, members of NOFX and Anti-Flag undertook an ideological shift in response to emergent socio-political changes. These artists risked their authenticated standing by suddenly advocating for participation with the mainstream culture industry and wider political system through the Punk Voter movement. This drastic shift pointed to a crisis in public life of such magnitude, arising from policies advocating war and surveillance, that it became necessary to set aside subcultural processes of authentication, at least momentarily, to focus on mobilizing the fan base against these legislative trends.

Responses to such efforts, from the likes of *Sniffin' Glue* founder Mark Perry, the members of Crass and, much more recently, Propagandhi reflect concerns stemming from the prospect of co-optation. Each instance of criticism appears rooted in the assumption that acting in collusion with mainstream culture, to any discernible degree, contributes to the invalidation of the artistic form as a whole. Principles of independent artistic creation and distribution led to accusations of having 'sold out' the integrity of the art form as a whole. In my opinion, the overarching thrust of these critiques appear less concerned with assessing the central logic, or taking account of the practical aims, of these 'heretical' punk artistic producers than initiating the process of characterizing those who might do so as illegitimate representatives of the 'true' punk rock artistic form. Detecting punk artistic 'pretenders' or 'opportunists' on the basis of collusion with the mainstream culture industry allows the punk critic to affirm their own ossession of

subcultural respectability and, by extension, their comparatively legitimate standing as punk artists and subcultural knowledge consecrators. This mode of critique is, perhaps, most salient in considering the case of Propagandhi's "Rock For Sustainable Capitalism," which parallels Mark Perry's attempts to discredit 'heretical' artists - and reinforce his own claims to proper punk rock sensibilities - in the pages of *Sniffin' Glue*.

I have also detailed the manner in which a number of punk artists characterized as 'heretical' respond to such critiques in a manner that draws attention to the Bourdieusian dimensions of the punk artistic field. Recall how Bad Religion's Greg Graffin explicitly suggests that restricted artistic producers tailor their practice toward their own claims to legitimacy and distinction, or the manner in which the Dead Kennedys and NOFX correlate the inefficacy of punk ideology with an exclusivist 'social club'. As such, punk culture can be described as one that asserts its' own purpose in the creation and celebration of a counter-hegemonic principles, and yet undermines its potential for instigating substantive movements toward counter-hegemony by virtue of the rites of division which participants necessarily engage with in asserting their own claims to 'authentic' punk cultural sensibilities.

8.3) Mainstream Proximity and Tendencies in Punk Artistic Discourse

One might anticipate that those periods during which the threat of mainstream co-optation was minimal would contribute toward more harmonious relations amongst different contingents of punk artistic producers. However, the emergence and decline of American hardcore punk demonstrates that the artistic producers of this era codified rites of legitimate subcultural participation and status-based hierarchies that were not merely restrictive, but highly

patriarchal. Connell suggests that 'protest masculine' expressions of strength and aggression remain complicit with the dominant order a view in keeping with Bourdieu's perspectives on the linkages between identity legitimization and the adoption of status-reflective subcultural practices. Excerpts from interviews conducted with the self-professed progenitors of the hardcore punk realm - and especially those stemming from the likes of Ian MacKaye and Henry Rollins - unapologetically refer to the hardcore punk artistic field as a contested territory wherein authoritative jurisdiction over the field was ultimately at stake. In the case of the Washington HarDCore Punk scene, the efforts of MacKaye and Minor Threat would contribute to the formation of an artistic field wherein subcultural capital took on a particularly hyper-masculinized form; thus restricting the capacity for those who would not (or could not) reinforce claims to superiority through displays of aggression.

If the American Hardcore Punk era entrenched Bourdieuan tendencies toward codification of individual status through hyper-masculine rites of status-seeking, it cannot be said that these tendencies were not subject to internal challenge and critique from artists affiliated with Gramscian philosophical tendencies. The (original) Dead Kennedys, for example, extended a number of pointed critiques toward the highly masculinized, and exclusivist, nature of the hardcore punk artistic field and subculture. Advocating a critical art form accessible to the largest possible audience (even in of the context of their endorsement of restricted modes of artistic production), Jello Biafra and his band mates addressed the detrimental effects of a hardcore punk symbolic economy which rendered the community more of an exclusive 'social club' than a subversive counter-hegemonic force. Indeed, the band's 1986 song "Chickenshit Conformist" chastised the 'so-called scene' for its exclusive and highly restrictive nature. Dating back to 1986, the punk rock artistic record has self-referentially harbored an unflattering

assessment of the manner through which the collectivist ideological capacities of the movement are undermined by individualistic drives for personal claims to insider status. Elements of this self-reflexive critical discourse would re-emerge at crucial points throughout the subsequent twenty years of punk rock artistry: once when Bad Religion's Greg Graffin challenged the artistic practices of certain mid-1990s 'neo-punk' acts - including Mike Burkett and NOFX - with similar intentions of fostering an elitist punk artistic field; again in the mid-2000s as NOFX themselves leveled similar critiques against members of Propagandhi. In so many words, the field of punk rock artistry has, over the course of the past thirty years, entertained instances whereby a contingent of artistic producers have explicitly spoken to the prospect that the codification of 'punk authenticity' hinders communication with audiences beyond the confines of the subculture itself.

If the field of punk artistic production can be approached as harboring two diametrically opposed artistic philosophies regarding the ultimate ends of the artistic form, those instances where artists of notable 'independent' stature opted to work against staunchly restrictive principles of artistic production are particularly illuminating. When acts such as NOFX and Anti-Flag privileged the imperative of instigating political mobilization over abiding by expectations of 'legitimate' punk artistic practice they wanted to reach the broadest possible audience - within particular socio-political contexts. For them, the political climate of the mid-2000s was a juncture where protecting the medium's status as a legitimate restricted form took on secondary significance against threats posed by the Bush Administration. These artists did not engage in 'heretical' punk artistic practices as a means of demonstrating their own artistic philosophical shift, but sought to advocate space for other consecrated punk acts to do the same. While advocating that their audience become more politically aware and engaged, the Punk

Voter movement also problematized the manner in which principles of restricted artistic production worked in opposition to counter-hegemonic goals of collectivization.

All this being said, it is difficult to attribute the staunch defense of restrictive artistic principles, by such politicized bands as Crass and Propagandhi, to a conscious desire to limit the dissemination of competing perspectives and critical knowledges celebrated throughout their artistry. Comparing Propagandhi's *Less Talk, More Rock* and Fat Wreck Chords' *Rock Against Bush* compilations, for example, the uninitiated would likely be hard pressed to find any significant variation in pedagogic technique. Nevertheless, Propagandhi's efforts to condemn the legitimacy of those musicians spearheading the Punk Voter movement correlate with aims of critiquing their 'heretical' methods of artistic conduct and self-presentation. Implicitly, Propagandhi's own notions of artistic impropriety (donning 'faux-hawks' and appearing in 'glossy magazines', for example) would appear to draw some inspiration from the prospect that artists whom they deemed inauthentic were now in the process of currying attention as politicized punk rock acts. Despite the counter-hegemonic aims of the Punk Voter movement, reaching potential converts through non-restrictive artistic means meant bands such as NOFX could be equated with the Hershey Candy corporation, discrediting both their message and their 'authority to speak' in one fell swoop.

This Frankfurtian tendency to privilege defense of punk's artistic legitimacy over the widespread dissemination of counter-hegemonic artistry and perspectives instigates a process of publicly assailing the credibility of such heretics. Doing so, even in spite of any parallels in artistic message, appears to function as a credible punk cultural means of protecting the ideological viability of the artistic medium in and of itself. To steal a quote from McLuhan, the medium is the message. Thus, an artistic field devoted to symbolic opposition to mainstream

culture industries coincides with a strict, self-imposed adherence to the practice of refusing methods of artistic distribution which might appeal to audiences beyond the highly insular contingent of those already 'in the know.' In this sense, prioritizing the artistic legitimacy of the medium over the broad distribution of the counter-hegemonic messages curtails distribution of the messages. Punk rock's ability to contribute to counter-hegemonic movements is undermined by an artistic field with imperatives toward division and stratification. In other words, a distinct lack of consensus is built in at the most basic level of punk subcultural (and, perhaps especially, punk artistic) identity formation.

8.4) Reconsidering Ideology, Interpellation and Identity

In lieu of suggesting that punk artists committed to restricted production (and audiences) aspire to perpetuate trends whereby their music fails to reach beyond the converted by design, I wish to briefly revisit the the themes of interpellation, the development of cultural sensibilities and identity formation. As I discussed in chapter three, Althusser argues that processes of identity formation contribute to 'ideological interpellation,' whereby the individual so internalizes an ideology as to accept it as an inherently possessed moral framework. Similar processes of punk ideological interpellation manifest within the punk artistic producer. As one undergoes socialization within the wider punk artistic field, the individual producer will recognize the imperative of constructing claims to status and authority based on their dedication to specific artistic principles. In sum, the producer's artistic philosophy serves as the bedrock of their claims to punk artistic identity in such a way that the seeming 'commonsensicality' of the logic masks the rather intrusive influence of the dominant ideological tradition. Further, these

processes of punk ideological interpellation are reinforced by the evolving punk artistic habitus and, with it, the seemingly inherent sensibilities that indicate ‘authentic’ and ‘inauthentic’ expressions of punk artistry, as well as the need to express possession of those sensibilities to relevant others. Hence, claims to competitors’ illegitimacy are rampant as the punk knowledge producer/consecrator claims offense to their own “superior” subcultural sensibilities.

The value of Althusser’s perspective that ideology and identity are indivisible is illuminated in the conduct of the punk artists I have considered throughout. Artistic producers are, therefore, susceptible to affronts against the ideologies which have informed the very core of their often embattled identities in two distinct but very closely interrelated ways: as practices which offend punk culturalists at the level of the habitus on an internalized level, and externally as practices which threaten the ‘value’ of one’s claims to punk legitimacy within the punk cultural field. Given that these contrasting forms of punk artistic ideology inform the very construction of the artistic producer’s self-actualization (as both a representative of the medium and a legitimate punk cultural connoisseur), it might be said that the very imperative of striving for artistic and individual accreditation as legitimate knowledge producers demands the denigration of those artists (or subcultural ‘others’) who conform to an alternative punk ideological framework. Thus a lack of consensus is necessary to consecrating the medium’s competing ideological narratives. This deters the likelihood of infusing a sense of collectivity and inherent commonality on which the effectiveness of Gramsci’s proscriptions for praxis hinge.

Finally, it is worthwhile to mention that the near-decade during which I have compiled this research corresponds with punk rock’s decline in youth cultural relevance. While it is true that the punk rock artistic form is still well represented in the artistic conduct of many acts, there are little grounds on which to suggest that the medium is particularly popular with contemporary

youth populations. While the punk artistic form persists, there is declining evidence to suggest that it carries the youth cultural currency it once entailed, even as contemporary youth populations are becoming better politically informed and engaged. Indeed, the Occupy movement, the Black Lives Matter movement, and recent youth cultural reactions to the Islamophobic tone of contemporary political discourse can be taken to indicate an interest in counter-hegemonic forms of political engagement. A corresponding interest in punk rock would not appear to be materializing. Given punk rock's declining stock as a significant youth cultural force, I feel that the punk culture must necessarily engage in a reflection upon the disconnection between the collectivist and individualist dimensions of punk cultural participation. Simply put, debates surrounding which form of punk artistic ideology ought to be perceived as superior ring increasingly hollow as the perpetuation of punk culture is endangered by increasing apathy on the part of wider audiences.

Finally, I wish to highlight again how the observations I advance here contribute to an understanding of the static nature of contemporary 'grassroots' social movements. In many respects, emergent web-mediated communicative technologies and new sources of alternative media use methods of knowledge distribution comparable to tactics endorsed by early punk fanzine publishers. Further, McCurdy (2012) suggests the growing accessibility and prevalence of alternative media sources play a significant role in challenging, and interfering with, the traditional process through which mainstream media aspire to frame or represent contemporary social movements in a derogatory or deviant light. While mainstream media are still a significant resource for information, the prevalence and easy accessibility of competing knowledges and perspectives now challenges the authority of the mainstream institution of mass media. Just as contemporary youth subcultural groups purpose collective web-spaces toward discussing the

ideologies, practices and goals of the wider collective, members of contemporary social movements can likewise be found to post information through which to familiarize members of the general public with their collective values, beliefs and overarching goals.

However, web-technologies also allow individuals themselves the ability to aspire to the role of authoritative knowledge producers. As demonstrated by my case studies of punk, this will render it difficult to ensure that all who are drawn to the cause share a uniform awareness of the central perspectives, ideologies and goals of the movement. One may recall the Occupy Wall Street protests of 2011 as a suitable example. In spite of the sheer number of persons who occupied New York City's financial district, the group lacked a clearly defined consensus regarding what the shared values and goals of the movement actually were. As the occupation drew on throughout the fall of 2011, the Occupy Movement attracted a wealth of criticism surrounding the fact that the occupation had been initiated in spite of the presence of any overarching manifesto or list of common group goals. This absence of a perceivable common cause ensured Occupy Wall Street's characterization as an ineffectual and amateurish. In lieu of being perceived as a unified group with ideological purpose, Occupy participants were characterized as individuals having been drawn to the group for their own purposes, or to 'play with' identities centered around symbolic rites of refusal (Sorkin, 2012; Pickett, 2011).

Even contemporary movements which do privilege a collection of common values and goals as authoritative can be perceived as taking on the trappings of the restricted punk culture. In 2010, the Canadian Indigenous Advocacy group Idle No More formed to protest modifications to Canada's Indian Act, as well as to condemn harmful environmental policies and promote the revitalization of traditional First Nations practices. The group would draw international media attention after declaring a day of national protest, in cities throughout Canada, against the

Federal government. Shortly thereafter, the movement would spread internationally, with “solidarity rallies and flash mobs” being conducted throughout countries including the United States, Sweden, Germany, New Zealand and Egypt (Groves, 2012). Subsequent reports suggest, however, that Idle No More group underwent notable divisions as the movement took on momentum, due primarily to a lack of consensus. As Schwartz (2013) suggests, the Idle No More group fractured as the central values and aims identified by the groups’ founders did not coincide with those of the growing majority. This lack of a consensus would even inspired the emergence of the Indigenous Nations Movement, an group of similar purpose which came to be to account for the perceived ideological shortcomings of the original Idle No More collective. Once again, crucial linkages can be made between Idle No More’s fracturation and the process in which the punk culture codified contrasting forms of artistic ideology. My hope is that this research will better illuminate these newfound difficulties in achieving consensus, and that future movements might pay explicit mind toward advancing strategies through which to interrogate whether such movements stem from considerations of collective ideology or individual empowerment.

8.5) Postscript: Ballads From The Revolution

This research suggests that becoming a consecrated punk artistic knowledge producer requires internal movements toward division as a means of perpetuating symbolic boundaries and the internal mechanisms through which artists strive to develop personal status. Just as modes of punk subcultural position-taking must critique the legitimate standing of others for the sake of broadcasting one's own legitimate claims to distinction, punk artistic producers have,

themselves, established a tradition of utilizing their artistry as a means of pointing out and condemning movements toward artistic heresy. Dominating behaviors are therefore built directly into the process of asserting ones' legitimate' claims to an authoritative punk artistic identity. Whether these artistic instincts indicate the influence of punk ideological interpellation, or evidence of implicit drives to consecrate dominant notions of artistic authenticity in accordance with the Bourdieuisian structure of the punk artistic field, or (as I would argue) both at one and the same time, declaring artistic illegitimacy and reinforcing notions of inherent difference negatively impacts punk's capacities to serve as a substantive counter-hegemonic force.

While punk rock is, therefore, unlikely to instigate anything resembling substantive collectivist movements independent of a rigorous and consensually instigated consideration of these dynamics, the prospect that punk rock can nevertheless lead toward revolutionary movements on a individualistic level remains. While the sensibilities demanded by the field of punk cultural music production (and consumption) function to divide punk artists into hierarchical factions, punk rock itself continues to inspire listeners to perceive the world from a critical vantage, fashion ways of living which honor and reflect allegiance to the principles of equality and social justice, and advocate that those within their own personal communities do the same. My own personal appreciation of this potential can be charted back to 1997, and more specifically with the release of the Good Riddance album *Ballads From The Revolution*. Reproduced here in its entirety, I wish to draw attention to a short essay, included with the album, which finds Good Riddance vocalist Russ Rankin self-reflexively considering the manner in which punk rock can empower listeners to engage with their own movements toward personal revolution:

Although the word 'revolution' often conjures up stark images of fierce rebellion and violent, dogmatic clashes between oppressor and oppressed, it is, I believe, in reality practiced on a much more personal level; at least in the context of one's involvement in the punk/hardcore scene. As humanity races inexorably towards a new century and punk, as a relevant social movement, winds down its second decade, I find myself wrestling with the inevitable hardships inherent in remaining steadfast in my ideals at a time when adherence to these principles is frowned upon by others my age. As someone who has invested close to fifteen years in this lifestyle I can attest that being punk at 29 is much different than being punk at 17. In today's world of alienation, avarice and despair it seems to be increasingly tempting for us to throw up our hands, overwhelmed by it all, and admit defeat - submitting ourselves grimly to whatever fate the powers that be have in store for us. As we grow older the pull to somehow conform, to normalize, to "outgrow" punk and hardcore becomes quite strong. I've watched more than a few friends who once claimed they would "never sell out" trade in their spikes and their Crass lp's for a more "acceptable" existence. Only by constantly reinventing my own personal definition of revolution have I survived to fight another day. I still believe that we can change the world but I am convinced that this battle will be won or lost on a more personal front depending on our ability to change and evolve as people; to experience our own inner-revolution. This might, in turn, affect those around us, the communities we live in and, ideally, the world. It is from this more practical revolt that this collection of songs is born; from such "revolutionary" notions as the belief that we are all intrinsically linked together - that we must treat those with whom we share this fragile planet with benevolence and compassion, from the idea that we can affect more positive changes in uniting in a common purpose

than by dividing in hatred, and that to the extent that we value and nurture our own interpersonal relationships will we invariably enrich our own lives and those around us. The real revolution lies in questioning the once unquestionable. Blind acceptance of somebody else's status quo and the age-old idea that we can't make a difference will be our downfall if we let it. We must never stop trying to better ourselves and the world around us. Remember that in a revolution of ideologies there can be no more potent weapon than the combination of values, sincerity, and conviction.

To briefly revisit a prevalent theme which has cropped up throughout my research, the concept of 'punk' has been codified, conceptualized and embodied in a myriad of different ways over the course of its history. Having drawn inspiration from a plethora of different artistic philosophies, historical contexts and regional cultures, seeking a unified definition of punk is clearly foolhardy. This would not appear to inhibit, however, a long tradition of punk artists molding identities and crafting artistry through which to advocate for their preferred perspective. In some cases, the punk artistic record indicates evolutions in artistic conduct or message which correspond with an artists' personal reassessment of punk's ends. Crucially, these initiatives often align with specific political contexts. For Ian McKaye and 'Revolution Summer' adherents, the recognition that they had fostered a patriarchal culture that used acts of violence to authenticate community standing instigated such introspection. Those who participated in the Punk Voter movement appear to have done so on the basis of the socio-political climate surrounding the Bush Administration's post 9/11 policies. For Rankin, self-actualization as a punk ideologue in the face of adult demands necessitated evolutions in his own conceptualization of punk and, by extension, the aims of his artistic endeavors. Those who invest in the

embodiment of punk ideals, in other words, do not shy away from endorsing new conventions of best practice - the implicit expectations of the wider field be damned - should the old conventions suddenly appear self-defeating or subject the artist to sensations of cognitive dissonance. While many punk artistic conventions codify authenticity by reinforcing manifest inequality, self-reflexive artistic philosophical recalibration remains possible. This movement toward a critical reconsideration of one's artistic aims most commonly draws from the construction of an artistic logic concerned with answering to the better interests of the wider society as opposed to those of the restricted punk rock community. Even Propagandhi would offhandedly suggest, by way of 1999's "Back To The Motor League," that the ideological cause might be best suited by the absence of punk subculturalists and, more specifically "[their] stupid scenes, [their] shitty 'zines, the straw-men [they] build up to burn" (Propagandhi, "Back To The Motor League". *Today's Empires, Tomorrow's Ashes*, 1999; Fat Wreck Chords).

Nonetheless, it must be kept in mind that punk rock is, at its core, an artistic form which stems from, and likely could not have arisen independent of, the Western construction of youth culture. In many ways, punk rock reflects upon the political marginalization, social disempowerment and representational politics which youth, as a social population, experience in the course of their daily lives. Given that punk rock is a form of music that is created primarily by youth and young adults for the consumption of young adults, it is not surprising that a surface analysis of the art, for many, merely confirms prevalent social narratives centered on emotionally atavistic, politically ambivalent youth. My analysis has striven to demonstrate, instead, that punk rock constitutes a youth artistic form with an underappreciated sophistication. I demonstrate the manner in which two significant forms of punk artistic ideology resemble, and in many respects act in correspondence with, the theories of prevalent neo-Marxist scholars.

Therefore, with respect to the culture of luminary punk rock artists, there are scant grounds on which to issue the post-subcultural postulation that such collectives lack an ideological dimension. Yet, given the demonstrable competition between these dominant punk artistic ideologies, the Birmingham theorists' contention that subcultures strive to signal a collective ideology also appears problematic.

While the forms of punk artistic ideology upon which I focus can be said to abide with credible artistic logics, the presence of this ideological divide cannot account for the corresponding drive to resistance, while striving to discredit or delegitimize their ideological artistic competitors. Using Bourdieu's theoretical framework, I have argued that this desire to mark out acts of artistic heresy correlate with the distinct manner in which Western youth (and contemporary Westerners in general) signify claims to individuality and status. As the likes of Medovoi and Bourdieu would anticipate, the artists whose works I detail throughout can be taken to assert their own claims to status through consumption practices. Granted punk rocks' early relationship with adolescent underclass populations, the most sought-after consumable would prove to be 'privileged' knowledge concerning 'authentic punk' and, just as importantly, the proper sensibilities with which to recognize it. My research also validates Bourdieu's contention that the value of these sensibilities can only be assessed in their comparison to 'illegitimate' forms of knowledge and taste. The impetus to engage with and mark claims to identity necessitates comparison to others so deemed inferior or comparatively inauthentic. While I would contend that the emergence of punk rock and its generational perpetuation stem from such an eclectic range of variables as to constitute a unique case study, my analysis ultimately poses a significant question: namely, whether counter-hegemonic movements toward collective praxis

are likely to take momentum among of collectives (or, fields) wherein individuals also take on the imperative of constructing claims to specialist identity.

While I argue that punk rock's counter-hegemonic capacity is undermined by the interaction of competing forms of punk artistic ideology, I would also suggest that a critique of the logics underlying these ideologies, given recent evolutions in communicative technologies may cast doubt upon the central logic of the Frankfurtian perspective. Simply put, Frankfurtian currents of punk rock ideology hinge upon the prospect that the mainstream culture industries retain their popular taste-making stature and, by extension, the ostensible powers to commodify and sterilize the art form. I would suggest that the same technological advancements which have contributed toward revolutions in web-mediated social interaction and the distribution of information have diluted the hegemonic authority of the mainstream entertainment industry. While the onset of online music piracy has negatively affected the fiscal stability of the music industry, the proliferation of increasingly accessible alternative resources through which to seek out new artistry ensure that the mainstream culture industries are denied their former claims to hegemonic saturation. At the time of this writing, artistic goods once rendered highly inaccessible through conventional channels are more likely than not available for free access through websites like Youtube.com, and established and fledgling punk artists alike are gravitating toward emergent forms of artistic production which eliminate the need for mediating institutions between the artistic producer and their audiences. These include the establishment of websites such as bandcamp.com, where bands make their music available for free download, or direct audience-funding initiatives such as the kickstarter.com support the likes of Amanda Palmer and the Juno Award winning metalcore-punk outfit Protest The Hero.

Without suggesting that we are anywhere near a stage whereby the decline of the culture industry and the proliferation of alternative methods of media distribution may change the game, I would argue that we might be approaching a period where it will be possible for punk artists to reach out to broader populations of potential ideological adherents without demanding the participation, at any level, of the institutions of the culture industry. If and when such a perfect storm of potentialities activate mass publics without grounds on which to be accused of 'selling out' or endangering the legitimacy of the medium, it will be interesting to see what types of artistic practices emerge. Will the field of punk rock artistry, no longer working in contradistinction to an "omnipresent" mainstream culture industry, gradually advocate for collective movements toward societal change; or will those who assume the position of punk rock knowledge producers find new grounds through which to project inferiority in the artistic practices or cultural sensibilities of their compatriots? In all likelihood, the probability of either evolution depends upon the presence - or absence - of punk artistic producers who engage in critical self-reflection, and advocate for audience enlightenment over the perpetuation of a 'social club'. Should this capacity emerge, we can only hope for the continued persistence of youth cultural blocs who might remain interested in what punk has to say.

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